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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

STORY READING IN A WHOLE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

by

© VERONICA HELLWEG

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled STORY READING IN A WHOLE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM submitted by VERONICA HELLWEG in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION.

Supervisor

Date Aug. 29, 1988

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of how a teacher with a whole language philosophy used story reading in her language arts program to further her students' literacy development. Information is provided as to what stories were read, who read them, why they were read and how they were used for language teaching and learning. Any interactions which took place before, during and after the story reading are also described and analyzed.

The language arts program in one grade one classroom was observed 26 times over a seven week period. The main data were collected using audio recordings and field notes. Transcripts were prepared and the data was organized and analyzed to see if any patterns or trends emerged.

The analysis revealed a classroom in which children were immersed in a stimulating oral environment and were treated by the teacher as equal partners in conversational exchanges.

Stories were read to children for several purposes, from helping children develop a love of literature to developing children's knowledge schema about the theme under study. The oral mode was used constantly to ensure children understood text. Despite the focus on meaning in other aspects of the program, the children seldom read for any meaningful purpose. Most of the reading was oral and children were usually treated as if they were all at the

same developmental level. Children had limited opportunities to focus on orthographic features of print.

Implications for teaching centred on community reading and personalized reading are described and suggestions for further research offered.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This chapter outlines the general nature of the study. Its purposes, limitations and significance are noted. Definitions of terms relevant to this study are provided.

Background to the Study

Research has shown that being read to during the pre-school years is positively correlated to successful literacy development in school (Clarke, 1976, Durkin, 1966, Teale, 1984; Wells, 1986). Book reading experiences have figured prominently in the backgrounds of children who became literate before formal schooling. Children who had been read to also performed better on school literacy tests and maintained their advantage throughout elementary school. They often showed a greater interest in literacy, asking more questions about word meanings and the sigificance of letter shapes. They also tended to spend more time on activities involving reading and writing.

Y. Goodman (1980), Wells (1986) and Smith (1986) suggested that early book experiences are important for children's later literacy development because:

1) they allowed children to gain experience with "the sustained meaning-building organization of written language and its characteristic rhythms and structures" (Wells, 1986, p. 151).

written language and its characteristic rhythms and structures" (Wells, 1986, p. 151).

2) familiarity with the conventions of print gave children proficiency in anticipating text thus allowing them to make successful predictions (Smith, 1986).

3) stories allowed children to extend the range of their experiences beyond their immediate surroundings.

4) stories provided a starting point for collaborative talk.

5) listening to stories let children discover the possibilities of using language to create imaginary worlds.

6) besides gaining an awareness that print conveys meaning, reading to children helped them formulate story schema (Teale, 1984).

7) reading to children helped them learn basic concepts about books such as concepts about print (Clay, 1979; Holdaway, 1979; Teale, 1984). Holdaway argued that "children with a background of book experience since infancy develop a complex range of attitudes, concepts and skills predisposing them to literacy" (p. 49). He called this a 'literacy set' (Appendix A). Both Holdaway and Wells agreed that schools must spend time developing this literacy set in children before they can successfully engage in school literacy activities.

Frequency in being read to was not the only factor to be considered. "The whole process of natural literacy development hinges upon the experience the child has in

reading and writing activities which are mediated by literate adults, older siblings, or events in the child's everyday life" (Teale, 1982, p. 559). Wells (1982) agreed that it was not the story reading event itself, but the interactions which surround the event which are important to the child's literacy development. The most useful interactions explored avenues of interest to the child and encouraged the child to link story events to his/her own experience. Studies in home environments have shown that book sharing is a social event. Rather than just reading to children, parents read with their children and employed numerous strategies such as pauses, questions and co-operative reading to involve the child in the book sharing (Doake, 1981; Juliebo, 1985; Taylor, 1983).

Recent studies have also emphasized the need to link the home and the school by being able to carefully judge what level a child is at and provide opportunities which best foster individual growth (Holdaway, 1979; Juliebo, 1985).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze how a grade one teacher with a whole language philosophy used story reading in her language arts program to further her students' literacy development. This study will describe what stories were presented, who read them, why they were read and how they were used for language teaching and learning. Interactions, if any, before, during and after the story reading will also be described and analyzed as will any responses the children and/or teacher made to the story reading.

Significance of the Study

If, as Y. Goodman (1980), Smith (1986) and Wells (1986) postulated, interactions with stories are an important predictor of success in literacy learning in schooling, then it is important that we come to understand how stories can be used at the onset of formal schooling to nurture children's literacy growth. This study describes and critically discusses how a teacher with a whole language philosophy used stories to further her students' literacy development. Implications for classroom teaching will also be discussed.

Definition of Terms

1. Whole Language - language which is whole, meaningful and relevant to the learner (Goodman, 1986). The term 'whole language' is a recent descriptor given much exposure in K. Goodman's book What's Whole in Whole Language.

2. Language Arts - is defined as in the Alberta Language Arts Curriculum Guide Revised Edition (1982) as follows:

> Language is a social behaviour. Therefore, the language arts program should provide opportunities for students to experience language in functional, artistic and pleasureful situations (p. 4).

Language Arts is seen as having four strands:

a) listening and viewing

b) reading and viewing

c) speaking

d) writing

3. Story - For the purpose of this study, story texts may vary from complete published texts, defined as having the following three characteristics as identified by Labov and Waletzky (1967):

a) exposition - actors and surrounding situation,

b) complication - bringing in some remarkable event which may contain many episodes,

c) resolution - where the story returns to a new, stable ,state,

to incomplete stories written by children.

Limitations of the Study

1. As the observations were conducted in only 1 classroom over a relatively short period of time, the findings are not generalizable.
2. The presence of the researcher may to some extent have distorted observed behaviours.

CHAPTER 2

SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature and research relevant to a whole language or process orientation to reading. The chapter is divided into four main sections. First, an overview of the whole language philosophy will be given. Second, oral language and reading research as it relates to a whole language philosophy will be examined. Third, the importance of the nature of interactive communication in the classroom will be discussed. Finally, the fourth section will describe the nature of whole language classrooms as well as research which looks closely at so called whole language programs.

A Whole Language Orientation to Reading

Teachers' theoretical orientations may affect their classroom practices (Harste & Burke, 1980). Though some teachers claim to use a variety of methods to teach reading and writing, their interpretation of how to implement certain approaches is filtered by their belief system of how language is learned and how literacy should be taught.

Three discernible theoretical orientations to teaching written language learning are:

1) a decoding orientation which views the knowledge of sound-symbol relationships as the key to learning to read and write. Meaning is thought to follow automatically once sounds are translated into words. Little attention is given to the function of or purposes for reading.

2) a skills orientation where the word is considered the basic unit of literacy. Reading and writing are seen to be composed of separable skills which can be taught and learned as discrete entities. This approach uses vocabulary controlled basal readers, accompanied by workbooks which offer practice using the words introduced in the basal readers.

3) a whole language orientation which sees meaning-making as the central purpose of reading and writing. In this orientation, readers are thought to use a variety of cues (e.g. grapho-phonic, syntactic, semantic) simultaneously to assist them in constructing meaning from a text (Harste & Burke cited in Edelsky, Draper & Smith, 1983).

With reference to reading, the first two orientations focus on the 'what' of reading with an emphasis on the teacher and the teaching of reading. What children need to know in order to process print is the central concern. The whole language or process orientation focusses on the 'how' of reading, specifically on how the learner constructs meaning from print. In this orientation, the communicative intent of reading is emphasized and "the child is encouraged

to use his knowledge of language and his knowledge of the world to interact with written language" (Malicky, 1980, p. 1).

Though we do not as yet have much evidence from practice as to the efficacy of whole language programs, proponents of a whole language philosophy use findings from language research to support their assertions.

Oral Language and Reading Research

Oral Language Research

Some writers have closely examined research in oral language development and use principles of oral language development to prescribe techniques for literacy teaching. Holdaway (1979) recommended the following principles:

1. Children learn best when immersed in an environment where language is used in purposeful ways.
2. They learn best in warm and supportive environments in which their approximations are reinforced.
3. The learners decide which aspects of the task will be learned and at what pace.

Wells (1986) studied children's language interactions in their home environments. He followed 128 children from the age of 15 months onward. He tape-recorded interactions using a pre-set timing device. He found that children went through the same developmental stages when learning

language. The numbers of conversations that children had with others was a factor in children's language development, with those who had more frequent conversations showing more rapid development. More important to progress was the nature of the conversations. Children progressed more rapidly when they were involved in one-to-one interactions about something of interest to them. If the adults in the conversational exchange failed to interpret the child's meaning correctly, then conversations usually ended. Snow (1983) called this semantic contingency, where adults continue topics introduced by children. Adults are semantically contingent if they give expansions that are limited to the content of the child's utterance, extend the topic by adding new information, demand that the child clarify utterances, and answer the child's questions.

In her study, Nelson (cited in Lindfors, 1980) supported the importance of interactions with children and added that frequent outings led to greater linguistic maturity. She also stressed the importance of less directive behaviour on the part of the mother and continual acceptance of the child's meaningful communication.

Britton (1970) contended that children learn language best in school when it is grounded in purposeful activities rather than 'dummy' runs. This implies that teachers should provide children opportunities to use language to fulfill various functions or purposes. Pinnell (1985) defined a

functional view of language as "focussing on how people use language in their everyday lives to communicate, to present themselves, to find out about things, to give information, to negotiate and interact" (p. 58). She suggested that teachers evaluate their effectiveness in fostering language use by observing children "in a systematic way to determine the range of language functions used in the classroom" (p. 58). These assessments could then be used to devise "strategies to extend children's use of language for a variety of social purposes" (p. 58). One system which could be used when observing children is the one developed by Halliday (1977) wherein he identified 7 functions of language:

1. Instrumental -- the 'I want' function
2. Regulatory -- used to control behaviour of others
3. Interactional -- the 'me and you' function
4. Personal -- expresses personal feelings
5. Heuristic -- the 'tell me why' function
6. Imaginative -- the 'let's pretend' function
7. Informative -- used to communicate information.

Nigel, the child observed by Halliday when developing these categories, had acquired all these functions of language by the age of 22 months. Halliday felt that children should experience the whole range of functions both in school and out.

Just as oral language is learned when children use language for communicative purposes, so literacy is learned when children experience print being used in purposeful ways (N. Hall, 1985). These literacy events are embedded in the ongoing events of the child's life. Y. Goodman (1980) claimed that one cannot look at literacy development "without understanding the significance of literacy in the culture - in both the larger society in which a particular culture grows and develops and within the specific culture in which the child is nourished" (p. 4). In her study of a community in which most literacy events were highly contextualized, Heath (1980) found that preschoolers learned to read some environmental print without instruction but resisted attempts by older siblings to involve them in decontextualized school-like literacy tasks.

Many researchers postulate that literacy learning is not simply moving from understanding form to understanding meaning. "Form clarifies and generates meaning, and meaning governs revision of surface text forms in both reading and writing" (Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984, p. 200). Children continuously engage thoughtfully as they intentionally strive to become literate (Iveson, 1988). They, of course, do not do this unasssisted and Vygotsky (1981) offered direction as to the role the adult should play. Vygotsky maintained that the role of the educator was to establish two developmental levels in each child. The first level is

called the actual developmental level and this is where a child is at, as the result of previous development. The second level he called the level of potential development. The distance between these two levels is called the zone of proximal development. He saw the role of the educator as being one who helps the child do today what "she will be able to do by herself tomorrow" (p. 87).

Through literacy we not only develop knowledge, but we symbolize reality and reflect on our past so that we can make sense of our present and our future (Britton, 1970). This enables us to appreciate and participate in our culture and actively change it (Freire, 1970).

Reading Research

A whole language philosophy also draws heavily from psycholinguistics, particularly in the work of K. Goodman and Smith. K. Goodman (1967) saw reading as a 'psycholinguistic guessing game' rather than as a precise process. He described readers as utilizing graphic, syntactic and semantic information simultaneously when reading. The reader uses these three cueing systems to help him/her make a prediction which is checked against the graphic information: "Skill in reading involves not greater precision, but more accurate first guesses based on better sampling techniques, greater control over language

structure, broadened experiences and increased conceptual development" (p. 132).

Smith (1975) saw prediction as essential to reading because:

1. "Individual words have too many meanings" (p. 305).
2. "The spellings of words do not indicate how they should be pronounced" (p. 305).
3. "There is a limit to how much of the 'visual information' of print the brain can process during reading" (p. 306). That is, reading is far too slow and cumbersome if one relied solely on a process of letter identification.
4. "The capacity of short-term memory (or 'working memory') is limited" (p. 306). It is "impossible to store the first words of a sentence while waiting to get to its end before making a decision about its meaning" (p. 306).

In order to use prediction effectively, "the material from which children are expected to learn to read must be potentially meaningful to them" (p. 310). Vocabulary controlled texts often used language that was so unnatural that prediction became impossible (Holdaway, 1979). Goodman (1986a) decried basal readers in current use in the United States for their lack of predictability, for their trivial stories and for their emphasis on skills which involve readers with language fragments rather than with real language used in functional ways. Bettelheim and Zelan (1982) agreed that the stories contained in basal readers

are often boring and meaningless. They do not take into account children's internal story schema (Mandler & Johnson, 1977). According to Bettelheim and Zelan:

> What is required for a child to be eager to learn to read is not knowledge about reading's practical usefulness, but a fervent belief that being able to read will open to him a world of wonderful experiences, permit him to shed his ignorance, understand the world, and become master of his fate (p. 49).

Research also stressed the benefits of offering children literature-based programs as they help children make sense of the world by opening their minds to other possibilities for structuring events (Britton, 1970; Brown, 1977; Dongen, 1987). Through literature we are able to "widen and deepen our knowledge of ourselves and of our relations with others" (Hoggart, 1970). Good stories can assist children integrate emotionally overwhelming events (Bettelheim, 1977; Butler,1977; Chambers, 1983), help children develop large vocabularies (Moore, 1987) and provides a model for children's own writing (Gambell, 1986).

Chambers (1983) asserted that books are so often used in schools for the acquisition of information and as a result, children may come to view fact-finding as the only purpose for reading. Rosenblatt (1982) believed that the transaction between reader and text can either be from from

an 'efferent' (information-seeking) stance or from an 'aesthetic' stance. She felt that literature lent itself to aesthetic reading in that, when reading from an aesthetic stance,

> A much broader range of elements will be allowed to rise into consciousness, not simply the abstract concepts that the words point to, but also what those objects or referents stir up of personal feelings, ideas, and attitudes. The very sound and rhythm of the words will be attended to. Out of these ideas and feelings, a new experience, the story or poem, is shaped and lived through (p. 269).

Rosenblatt believed teachers "have the responsibility first of all to develop the habit and the capacity for aesthetic reading" (p. 272).

Writers such as Clay (1979), Chambers (1983), Y. Goodman (1980), Holdaway (1979), and Juliebo (1985) asserted the importance of teachers being role models for children. Young literacy learners appear to learn best when immersed in a meaningful print environment where they see others using print in a variety of contexts. In whole language classrooms teachers must not only stress the importance of reading but must demonstrate their love and use of literacy.

Writers such as Doake (1981), Holdaway (1979), and McKenzie (1977) postulated that literacy learning is

developmental in that young literacy learners pass through discernible stages during their movement towards fluency. McKenzie's model suggests three main levels: emergent reading, tackling print, and early reading (Appendix B).

The Goodmans' (1979) described literacy development as a natural though not innate process. They also emphasized the important role of the teacher when they wrote, "teaching children to read is not putting them into a garden of print and leaving them unmolested" (p. 139). Yetta Goodman (1980) asserted that children become aware of written language because significant others bring it to their attention.

Interactive Communication

If the development of written language competency is so closely linked to the interactions between the child and the literate people in his/her world, then it is important to describe the characteristics of those interactions which facilitate the child's development as a proficient reader and writer. Feuerstein et al. (1980), in their book on Instrumental Enrichment provided a basis for examining these interactions. The psychologist Feuerstein developed his conceptual framework for mediated learning through his extensive work with Israeli youth who demonstrated retarded intellectual development.

Feuerstein conceived learning to be the combined result of a child's direct response to sources of stimuli and mediated learning. The former is consistent with formulations of stimulus-response theorists. Mediated learning refers to the way in which "stimuli emitted by the environment are transformed by a mediating agent, usually a parent, sibling or other caregiver" (p. 16). Such mediation affects the cognitive structure of the child and enable him/her to acquire behaviour patterns and learning sets which "become important ingredients of his capacity to become modified through direct exposure to stimuli" (p. 16). Thus, the more and earlier a child is subjected to mediated learning experience, "the greater will be his capacity to efficiently use and be affected by direct exposure to sources of stimuli" (p. 16).

Following are the characteristics of a mediated learning experience as outlined by Feuerstein et al (1980):
1. Intentionality on the part of the mediator: This intentionality may be explicit as when the mediator deliberately slows down his/her actions when observed by a child so that "the child is able to register the transformations produced by the mediator's behaviour in terms of the relationship between the sequence of acts and the specific outcome" (p. 22). The intentionality may also be an implicit expectation of the culture. That is, certain mediated interactions occur to serve culturally determined

needs. Intentionality may be shared by the recipient of interaction as part of the interactive process.

2. The transcendent nature of mediated interaction: The mediator must "transcend the immediate needs or concerns of the recipient of the mediation by venturing beyond the here and now, in space and time" (p. 20). Transcendence occurs in interactions which include explanations and generalizations allowing the recipient of mediation to understand the reasoning behind the instruction. For example, consider the following interactions between mother and child:

1) "Read this book." or

2) "Reading this book may help you find the answer to your question."

With the second instruction, the child is told the reasoning behind the command. This will allow the child to access this behaviour in a similar situation. In the teaching of literature, this could involve showing children the links between stories, or between a story and their experience. It is this transcendent nature of interactions that is the defining characteristic of mediated interactions.

When these two characteristics are combined with the following four elements, effective mediated learning results (Feuerstein & Hoffman cited in Juliebo, 1985).

3. The interactions are endowed with meaning because the mediator ensures that the child focusses on relevant stimuli.

4. The mediator gives the child a feeling of competence allowing the child to feel confident that he/she can handle future learning tasks successfully.

5. The mediator must regulate the pace and flow of information to ensure the child's success.

6. The mediator shows the child how to share behaviour whether the emphasis is a common interest or sharing feeling, impressions and ideas.

Hoffman et al see language as the most efficient transmitter of learning, though other modalities such as gesture and mimicry may also be used.

In contrast to positive findings in home environments, studies of school interactions showed that teachers dominate conversations (Dillon & Searle, 1981; Juliebo, 1985). Similarly, Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) found that students had little opportunity to initiate exchanges during lessons. Student initiated exchanges occurred most frequently during the time when they were working on assignments. To counteract this, the Rosens (1973) suggested that teachers invite children to talk in conversation-like situations. This indicated the need for teachers to interact with children on an individual or small group basis for at least part of the day. They also suggested that varied

conversational groupings would perhaps allow children to use language for a wider range of functions than is often the case. In her study of three classrooms which allowed many opportunities for interaction, Pinnell (1975) found that the interactional, informative, and regulatory functions dominated the school day. She found that classroom tasks and teachers' subtle expectations about appropriate language use made a critical difference in the range of language functions used by children.

Dixon (1975) argued that children will only explore ideas if the classroom atmosphere is supportive and where the child feels that his "thinking aloud will be taken seriously" (p. 30). Wells (1986) contended that group discussions must focus on the collaborative construction of meaning. Teachers, of course, play a vital role in this when they help children extend their meaning by "scaffolding" explanations (Bruner, 1978; 1983).

Applebee and Langer (1984) propose a model of instructional scaffolding to assist children with their literacy learning. When using this model, teachers provide students with any necessary assistance to help them carry out unfamiliar tasks. To use this model, teachers must determine what aspects of a task will likely provide difficulties for students. They must then select strategies which will help students overcome these difficulties and make these strategies explicit to students. This can be

done by modelling or through appropriate questioning. The scaffolding provided is withdrawn as students learn to carry out the task without support.

Whole Language Classrooms and Related Research

As previously mentioned, educators with a whole language philosophy view children as active constructors of meaning in their transactions with both oral and written language. This focus on meaning-making is a central tenet of the whole language philosophy (K. Goodman, 1986; Goodman & Goodman, 1981; M. Hall, 1986; Newman, 1983; Rich, 1985) and is the basis of the deep structure of whole language programs. The above writers advocate that whole language classrooms should have the following characteristics:

1) Whole language classrooms are child-centered.

2) They operate with a wide range of groups which are formed on the basis of interests rather than ability. These groups are fluid and change as children's interests change.

3) Programs are constructed to build on children's strengths and minimize deficits.

4) Literacy learning is seen as an extension of children's natural learning abilities and just as all children learn to speak, so it is assumed that all children will become literate.

5) Risk taking should be encouraged. Classroom atmospheres are created which see errors as a necessary part of

development. Cochrane et al. (1985) agree that teachers must establish atmospheres which provide children with security and love so that they become confident in their own abilities to succeed and where they can risk being wrong. This is not new: language researchers such as Britton, Moffett, Nelson, Rosen, Dixon, and Wells have stressed such a stance for a long time.

6) In these classrooms, whole texts which are meaningful and relevant are used in communicative situations. These classrooms are filled with books, and literature is an important facet of the program.

7) Talk is considered important and children are given opportunities to interact.

Although many classrooms have long operated on these principles, it is only recently that research focussing on these criteria has described the classrooms as being 'whole language' ones.

Gunderson and Shapiro (1987) conducted research in two grade one whole language classrooms. They examined children's writing and found that children came to understand phonics even though no explicit phonics instruction was given. They also found that the children learned high frequency vocabulary.

Kennedy and Rabinovitch (1986) found that grade one students involved in whole language programs maintained positive attitudes towards reading throughout the year.

They felt that these attitudes towards reading and writing were a key variable in their reading success.

Clarke (1987) reported that whole language classrooms were introduced into Denver public schools in 1984 and have had much success. However, doubts are beginning to surface. Parents are concerned about their children acquiring the 'basics'. Clarke felt this happened because whole language projects did not always conform to the expectations of parents who were used to workbooks, worksheets and teacher-centered instruction. Clarke felt the quick expansion of the program, which meant personnel were required to implement a program for which they had been inadequately inserviced, was also a contributing factor. The loss of a few of the administrative personnel who had been strong proponents of the whole language program also contributed to the unhappiness with the program.

Scibior (1987), a teacher educator from Mount Saint Vincent University in Nova Scotia, reported that she still encounters strong resistance to whole language programs from some educators. While she felt some educators were only displaying an unhealthy resistance to change, others had "healthy hesitations about unreasonable expectations for change" (p. 183).

She suggested these hesitations centered around:
1. "A somewhat negative tone inherent in the prevailing climate of change" (p. 184). Experts were communicating the

message that whole language teachers were more caring than more traditional teachers.

2. Teachers were being expected to implement whole language programs with minimal support in the form of staff development programs.

3. Teachers had been led to believe that whole language programs did not teach any skills, existed without any organizational structure and involved no use of standardized materials and activities.

Scibior described these misconceptions and felt they needed to be addressed.

Summary

From the literature there emerges a picture of a whole language teacher as being one who believes that literacy learning is a gradual process beginning early in a child's life (Chapman, 1986). Whole language teachers attempt to build programs which take into account children's prior knowledge about literacy. They view literacy learning as a natural extension of oral language learning and believe that just as oral language learning occurred through extensive interactions with others in a language rich environment, so children become literate when interacting with others in book sharing sessions (M. Hall, 1986).

Whole language teachers organize children around interests rather than abilities. They provide students with

a variety of functional reading and writing activities (M. Hall, 1986). Real books are used in whole language classrooms and students are encouraged to select their own reading materials and respond creatively to the stories they read. The emphasis is on reading for its own sake and on 'reading to learn' rather than learning to read.

Oral communication is thought to be important and whole language teachers provide students with supportive environments where they are encouraged to verbalize their thoughts as they search for meaning.

Let us now look at how one grade one teacherp with a whole language philosophy used story reading in her language arts program. Information will be provided as to what stories were presented, why they were presented, who read them and how they were used for language teaching and learning. Interactions between students and teacher and among students before, during and after the story reading will be described and analyzed as will any responses the children and/or teacher made to the story reading.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This study provides data describing the nature of story reading (both by the teacher and her students) in a grade one classroom in which the teacher has a whole language philosophy. This study describes story reading in terms of what stories were presented, who read them, why and when they were read, and how the stories were used for language teaching and learning. The research methodology and design had to take into account both the interactions which took place before, during and after the story reading as well as to provide a description of the context in which interactions took place. It was decided that the best way to realize the purpose of this study was to use a qualitative research approach.

This chapter will describe some general characteristics of qualitative research.

This will be followed by a description of the techniques and procedures used for gathering and analyzing data.

Characterisics of Qualitative Research

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) describe qualitative research as having the following characteristics:

1. In qualitative research, the natural setting provides the main source of data. Qualitative researchers believe that context affects behaviour. In this study, context was considered important because of its influence on both the nature of the story reading and on any interactions which occurred.

2. Qualitative research is descriptive. However, as Wolcott (1985) points out, good description is not enough. Qualitative researchers must also try to "make sense out of what they have observed" (p. 189). Data collection and analysis occur concurrently rather than sequentially.

3. "Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products" (p. 28). They are concerned with how people negotiate meaning.

4. In qualitative research, the data is analyzed inductively. That is, researchers do not enter the field with specific questions, but gain direction as they analyze their data. This is called grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

5. "'Meaning' is of essential concern to the qualitative approach. Researchers who use this approach are interested in the ways different people make sense out of their lives" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 29)..

Selecting a Setting

The language arts consultant of the school system in which the research was to be carried out was asked to recommend grade one teachers with a whole language philosophy. Based on her recommendation, the school principal of the teacher selected for this study was phoned and I sought permission to conduct my observational research. The principal gave permission on the condition that Mrs. Dixon, the selected teacher, agreed to participate in my research. I phoned Mrs. Dixon and explained that I was interested in doing some observational research of her language arts program. She was amenable to this and arrangements were made for an initial interview. I explained that I was interested in seeing how story reading was used in a classroom where the teacher held a whole language philosophy. Mrs Dixon agreed to participate in my study and a research schedule was set up.

A letter was sent home to parents or guardians of the children in Mrs. Dixon's class explaining the nature of the research and asking permission for their children to participate in my study (Appendix C).

The Research Schedule

Because Mrs. Dixon implemented her language arts program using a thematic approach, the research schedule was

set up to allow me to observe the development of one complete theme. The research was conducted over a period of 7 weeks with a total of 26 visits being made involving eight-four hours of observation. The classroom was visited every day with interruptions occurring due to school inservices, holidays, field trips and teacher absence from the classroom because of illness.

Mrs. Dixon spent approximately 70% of the school day with her grade 1 class and 30% of her day was spent teaching music to other classes in the school and inservicing teachers. I visited the classroom from March 2 through April 23. Daily observations followed this timetable:

Monday: 8:40 - 10:15
Tuesday: 8:40 - 12:00
Wednesday: 8:40 - 12:00, 1:00 - 2:15
Thursday: 8:40 - 12:00
Friday: 8:40 - 12:00, 1:00 - 3:05

Data Collection

The bulk of the data was collected through direct observation and interviews. Throughout my observations, I mainly adopted the role of passive participant (Spradley, 1980) limiting my interactions to those activities which helped me gain rapport with the participants of my study (Borg & Gall, 1983). For instance, during my first

classroom visit, I explained my presence to the children. After that, I responded to children when they addressed me and became an audience when they wished to read me stories they had written.

The role of passive participant was also forsaken when I asked questions in order to gain more information or when trying to find out how participants viewed a certain situation. For example, I noticed that Mrs. Dixon frequently read books which the children brought from home that did not necessarily pertain to the theme under study and I asked her the purpose for doing this. These informal interviews helped me develop rapport and gave me insights which could not have been gleaned solely from observation. Informal encounters with both teacher and students during recess and lunch breaks also helped develop rapport.

At the end of my observations, I held a lengthy interview with Mrs. Dixon in order to gain further insights about her language arts program and her philosophy of education.

Data Gathering Techniques

Observations of the classroom context during story reading sessions were recorded in the form of field notes. Audio recordings were also made. The field notes were kept in the form of a daily journal containing both reflective

and descriptive elements (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). The descriptive part contained my observations of the classroom context. In these observations, I tried to remain as objective as possible. I tried to set aside my own preconceptions of what was going on and sought to explore the setting as it was viewed by the participants (Wilcox, 1982). The audio recordings provided a safeguard against allowing my prejudices to influence what was recorded in the field notes. Periodically my supervisor, a professor of language arts education, compared my field notes with the audio tapes.

The reflective diary contained my speculations, hunches and impressions. Every night, the field notes were read. After this, entries were written in the reflective diary.

The lengthy interview held at the end of my observations was also recorded using audio tapes.

Data Interpretation

In order that classroom behaviour remain as normal as possible, the participants were not told the particular focus of the study -- that interactions were to be analyzed. My presence, along with my accompanying audio recorder, did seem to affect the children's behaviour during the first couple of days of observation, with the children sometimes 'performing' for the audio recorder. This only lasted 1 - 2

days and then my presence and that of the audio recorder no longer seemed to attract notice.

The process of data interpretation was a lengthy one. Transcripts of field notes were read by me and my supervisor. Initially, we made comments in the margins as we read the transcripts. Then the transcripts were categorized according to what stories were read, who read the stories, why they were read and how they were used for language teaching and learning. With the transcripts organized in this manner, each of the categories were examined to see if any patterns or trends emerged.

Reliability

Reliability is the fit between what actually occurred and what was recorded. Guba (1981) suggested that collecting data using various methods is an important source of reliability in a qualitative study. In this study, data was collected using observation, audio recordings and interviews. The data was also audited by my supervisor to verify the categories devised for reporting data.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

This chapter contains a description of the context in which the data was collected. Both physical setting and emotional climate of the classroom under study will be described. The philosophy of Mrs. Dixon, the classroom teacher, is also outlined as is her approach to the thematic teaching of language arts. Then the data, showing how story reading was used in this classroom, will be described and analyzed in terms of who read the stories, why the stories were read and how they were used for language teaching and learning.

The Cultural Setting

This study was conducted in a grade one classroom in a large Canadian city school system. This school's enrollment consisted of approximately 500 students registered in kindergarten through grade 9. Students at the school came from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

I observed Mrs. Dixon and her 22 grade 1 students daily, making 26 visits over a 7 week period during the months of March and April of 1987. Interruptions occurred only because of school inservice days and school holidays. I did not attend on days when Mrs. Dixon was absent from class.

Mrs Dixon used a thematic approach and my observations were conducted so that I was able to observe one theme from start to finish. I also observed the beginning of a second thematic unit.

The Classroom Setting (Physical)

Mrs Dixon, the classroom teacher, had expended considerable effort creating a stimulating learning environment for her students. Unhappy with standard issue student desks or hexagonal tables, Mrs. Dixon had children sit in groups of 5 or 6 at round tables she had constructed. Each child had a storage box for scribblers taped to the back of his/her chair. A container in the center of each table made pencils, erasers and crayons easily accessible to all.

By applying for various grants, Mrs. Dixon had acquired a fairly extensive book collection for the classroom library. These books and magazines were attractively displayed on racks and shelves. The class library also contained homemade books written by the children. The library center invited children to sit and read; with toss cushions, rugs and stools scattered throughout. Grants were also used to develop a toy center. This toy center contained wooden blocks, lego, cars and trucks. A dollhouse had been set up on shelves in one corner of the room.

There was also a collection of puppets for the children to play with. A computer had been set up in another corner of the room and Mrs. Dixon had several computer programs available for the children to use which stressed skill development. The children sometimes had difficulty working their way through these programs for example, supplying the missing letters in words.

Bulletin boards displayed a homemade alphabet chart with several labelled pictures illustrating each letter. There were also charts depicting the numbers 1-20 and pocket charts displaying vocabulary introduced throughout the unit. Some bulletin board space was also reserved for displaying student work.

The cloakroom attached to the classroom was used to store children's coats and lunches. It also contained a round umbrella table with 4 chairs. Children often worked at this table during center time. Center time involved the children in various reading writing and listening activities. The materials for the centers were located on shelves in the room. Once children had gathered together the materials necessary to complete a center activity, they were generally allowed to work wherever they chose. (See Appendix D for floorplan.)

The Classroom Setting (Emotional)

Mrs. Dixon tried to create a calm, safe climate in her classroom. The children were open and friendly with each other and with visitors to the classroom. They spent a large part of their time working in centers. During this time they were usually allowed to choose whether to work alone or in groups. Mrs. Dixon valued independent learning and had taught the students to move independently from one activity to another. During class discussions, children were respectful of each other's ideas and listened attentively. They did however, feel free to disagree with one another and seemed willing to make their own contributions to the ongoing work. Children's initiations were highly valued and helped guide the direction of discussions. Teacher and students equally shared in meaningful talk. This was in direct contrast to teacher dominated talk. (Dillon & Searle, 1981; Juliebo, 1985; Wells, 1986).

A Typical Day

Mrs. Dixon was in her grade one classroom approximately 70% of the total class time. She spent every morning with her class and was also there Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons. The remainder of her time was spent teaching music to the elementary classes at the school and

inservicing teachers. She worked very closely with the replacement teacher in her classroom so that themes could be jointly developed. Mrs. Dixon's primary responsibilities in her grade one clasrooom lay in completing the language arts and mathematics curriculum, though she felt that her integrated approach incorporated other subject areas. Mrs. Dixon made flexible plans and did not follow a rigid time sequence but the day's program went roughly as follows:

8:40-9:00	Class entry, prayers, date, weather, show-and-tell
9:00-9:05	Home reading program book returns
9:05-9:15	Word Identification Strategies
9:15-9:45	Language Arts lesson
9:45-10:15	Center work
10:15-10:30	Recess
10:30-11:00	Continue with center work
11:00-11:45	Math
11:45-12:00	Play center,story time or share completed work.

The children normally continued with their center work during those afternoons that Mrs. Dixon was with them.

The Thematic Approach

There is general agreement that context affects learning (Britton, 1970; Lindfors, 1980; Rosen & Rosen, 1973). This context is both linguistic and social or situational (M. Hall, 1986). Mrs. Dixon's approach to thematic teaching was part of the context of her teaching and needs to be discussed. Thematic units were created on the basis of stories found in the Unicorn Reading Series. Mrs. Dixon moved progressively through the text and used each text story as the basis for a thematic unit. Although Mrs. Dixon followed the reader systematically, she did not feel pressured to complete all the readers suggested for grade 1. Rather than using the workbooks and other components of the Unicorn Reading Series, Mrs. Dixon used books, stories and learning centres to assist the children in their literacy development.

During the course of this research, I observed the completion of the unit, The Gingerbread Man, watched the Chick unit in its entirety, and observed the beginning of the Jack and the Beanstalk unit. Though thematic units were centered around stories found in the Unicorn readers, these units were not narrowly developed as Mrs. Dixon made changes to the units where she deemed these appropriate. For example, the Jack and the Beanstalk unit, was broadened to encompass Fairy Tales. The Unicorn reader story, The Red

Hen and Her Chicks provided the basis for the chick unit and Mrs. Dixon used this unit to help children develop knowledge about new life in general. Mrs. Dixon believed that a wide range of experiences assisted children in relating to written language. She felt strongly that schools must provide children with a broad experiential base to help them view their literacy development as a meaningful experience. Her program certainly reflected this belief. She hatched chicks in the classroom. These hatched chicks remained in the classroom for about a week and children were given ample time to observe the chicks and hold them. The children baked bread with Mrs. Dixon's mother. They were allowed to touch and taste several varieties of grain seeds. Writing with quills was another activity planned for the children. The children also planted seeds which were later taken home. Part of this seed planting involved planting broad beans. These beans grew tall and became the introduction to the Jack and the Beanstalk unit. Children also brought cardboard boxes to school and painted them to create the giant's castle. At the toy centre, children were encouraged to use the materials to dramatize stories read in class.

With some exceptions, children were allowed to work in a way which suited them. For example, the children could choose the location for their work Mrs. Dixon had recently followed up her interest in learning styles with related university course work. She tried to accommodate children's

differing learning styles in her classroom. Groups in her classroom were generally quite fluid, with children working first with one group and then another. Sometimes children opted to work alone. They either physically separated themselves from the others or they worked at their own project at a table where they could interact with others when they wanted.

Mrs. Dixon involved the children in her curriculum planning. Prior to beginning a thematic unit, she led the class in a discussion to elicit the children's background knowledge of the topic to be studied. This enabled Mrs Dixon to make curriculum decisions based on student needs. The background knowledge elicited was put on a chart (Appendix E). While working through the unit, Mrs. Dixon returned to this chart a couple of times and the children added new information they had acquired. (Appendix F) This provided Mrs. Dixon with a check of children's learnings and indicated areas needing more work.

The children were also involved in helping Mrs. Dixon monitor the effectiveness of the program. At the end of a unit, Mrs Dixon had children evaluate the centers by having them write which was their favorite center and why. She used these evaluations to adjust her centers. Very popular centers were examined to ascertain what made them so. Centers which had seen little use were either discarded or

were examined to see if they could be upgraded to incorporate elements of some of the more popular centers.

Mrs. Dixon's Philosophy

To gain a better understanding of Mrs. Dixon's rationale for certain classroom practices, I conducted an interview with her after my observations had been completed. During the course of the interview, Mrs. Dixon, using a statement she had prepared for an inservice, outlined her philosophy as follows:

1. I believe every child has a right to learn in a style which is natural to them.

2. I believe a rich learning environment is a key factor in the learning process for all children whether they have attention deficits, are second language learners or special needs children.

3. I believe as professionals we need to expand our knowledge. We need to learn from one another.

4. I believe as our students go on from year to to year, we look for strengths in each child and work through their strength areas.

5. I believe as teachers we should see the beauty in each child and should try to avoid labelling them.

6. I believe as teachers we learn with the children. We plant the seed and grow together. We provide experiences so our children can learn. These experiences provide children with something to write about and share with one another.

7. I believe proper planning is the key to shaping children's learning.

8. I believe we have to give children time to share their feelings and work with one another. We must become good listeners.

9. I believe self-esteem is so important. Without good self-esteem, learning will not take place.

10. I believe some children need hugs not once a day but many times a day.

11. I believe we must look at the total child.

From this transcript we see that Mrs. Dixon's stated philosophy--with its insistence on accepting children as they are, providing a rich learning environment and assuring

that children have opportunities to use language in meaningful ways is consistent with the whole language approach to teaching (Goodman, 1986). The purpose of this study was to look at the ways in which story reading was used in a classroom with a whole language philosophy. Mrs. Dixon's classroom provided an ideal setting for acomplishing this purpose.

Data Analysis

Throughout my observations, Mrs. Dixon both read stories to the children and set up situations where the children read stories to various audiences. When analyzing the data, I have separated it into those two categories -- the children being read to, and the children as readers. To begin, I will describe and analyze those sessions where Mrs. Dixon read stories to the children. These story reading sessions will be described in terms of what stories were read, why they were read and how they were used for language teaching and learning. During my observations, a student teacher was working in Mrs. Dixon's class and she taught 5 language arts lessons over a 2 week period. Also, as an Education Week project, the school had initiated a program where teachers read stories to students in different classes. The contributions of the student teacher and the various guest teachers to Mrs. Dixon's program will also be

discussed. Transcripts will be used to illustrate salient features of these story reading sessions. The following abbreviations have been used in the transcripts to indicate the various speakers:

T = Teacher (i.e. Mrs. Dixon)

StT = Student Teacher

Guest T = Guest Teacher (This abbreviation is followed by a number from 1 - 4 to indicate the different guest teachers.)

St = Student (When student's name was not known.)

Stories Read to Children

What Stories were Read

As part of her thematic planning, Mrs. Dixon pulled together a collection of books related to each theme under study. She read these books aloud to develop children's knowledge schema about the topic of study. These texts were a mixture of narrative and expository modes. As many of the activities set up for children involved creative writing, Mrs. Dixon also read texts composed by children.

The children were urged to bring to school any books they had at home which related to the theme. Books brought in were incorporated into the unit. These books were given as much importance as were teacher selected books. For instance, both The Egg Book and The Tale of Tommy Nobody had

been brought in by students and provided the basis for lessons in the Chick unit.

Some of the books read by Mrs. Dixon like The Emergency Room and The Fire Cat, were unrelated to the theme. These were books which children had brought in as their show-and-tell item:

> Joe: This is The Emergency Room (shows book to class) and this boy he twisted his ankle and here's the stretcher.
> T: Let's see. (She takes the book) We'll try and read it this afternoon.

In conversation, Mrs. Dixon said she often read these books to encourage children with their own reading. Indeed, she always read books brought in by reluctant readers.

Why Stories Were Read

Mrs. Dixon's reasons for reading texts varied from developing in children a love of books to furthering children's knowledge base of the theme under study. Developing children's love of literature was most often an implicit intention. Developing children's knowledge about some aspect of the theme under study was the usual purpose children were given for listening to a story. For example, after a lengthy discussion aimed at eliciting children's

background knowledge about 'eggs', Mrs Dixon gave children the following purpose for listening to The Egg Book:

> T: I am going to share with you some stories and then we'll come back and we are going to see if we can add some eggs and types of animals to our list.

The next day she introduced the book What's Inside? saying:

> T: Today I want to show you what happens inside that egg.

Interactions during and after the story reading sessions saw these purposes realized.

The student teacher's main purpose for reading stories to the children was also to extend the children's knowledge base about the theme. She read the children three versions of the story, Red Hen and Her Chicks. Then she provided children with a concrete experience by bringing in a sheaf of wheat for them to examine. She also brought in a diagram of a hen and helped the children label the different parts of the hen's body. This later became one of the center activities.

On Mrs. Dixon's instructions, the student teacher often checked children's comprehension of the story read using comparison circles. For example, after reading two versions of Red Hen and Her Chicks:

StT: Think of the differences between the first story and the second story.

Susan: One had a seed and the other one didn't.

StT: One has a seed. Which one had a seed?

Susan: This one. (pointing)

StT: This one had a seed. What did this other one have?

St: Corn seed.

StT: Right.

She then proceeded to write the correct information in the correct circle for each story.

Mrs. Dixon sometimes used comparison circles and sometimes had the children answer 1 or 2 questions about the story to check their comprehension. For instance, after reading 2 versions of Jack and the Beanstalk:

T: Today you are going to draw a picture to show how these 2 stories are different.

The children were assigned partners and set about the task. They checked in frequently with Mrs. Dixon to show her their progress. As she talked with individual children she could be heard saying, "I want you to show how they are different."

The guest teachers, on the other hand, appeared to have one main purpose for reading to the children. This was sharing one of their own favorite stories. Four different guest teachers read to the children in Mrs. Dixon's class. Each of them introduced their story in terms of how much they or someone else had enjoyed the book they were about to read. For example:

> Guest T 3: This is one of my favorites.
> Guest T 4: I read this story to another class and I know that they really liked it because a lot of people really like dinosaurs.

Though Mrs. Dixon appeared to focus on teaching content, she was developing a love for literature in her students. The students enjoyed being read to and frequently asked to have another story read. Douglas's comments clearly reflect this:

> Douglas: We have 3 favorite things in this room. Guess what they are?
> Me: Oh, I'm not sure.
> Douglas: One is wood blocks and lego. (referring to the toy center) And guess what? Reading. And guess what the third thing is? It starts with an 'r'.
> Me: Uhm
> Douglas: Recess.

Earlier in the year Mrs. Dixon had had the children create a 'story sweater'. Mrs. Dixon explained that she had used the sweater frequently at the beginning of the year, wearing it whenever she read the children a story. After the reading, the children would decide what symbol could be made to represent the story. For example, for the book Green Eggs and Ham green eggs had been cut out of felt and pinned onto the sweater.

As might be expected, Mrs. Dixon often read student composed texts. This usually happened in a one to one situation. Wells (1983) suggested that one to one interactions allow "a greater reciprocity of interactions" (p. 290) than do the whole group interactions which predominate classroom life. Children are freer to test their thoughts and ideas in one on one situations. For example, while writing Jimmy shared his observations of the chicks with Mrs. Dixon:

> Jimmy: Teacher, when you put them down, they walk in thin air.
>
> T: Oh write that out!

Teacher's validation of his idea and her encouragement to express his idea in written form led Jimmy to include this idea in his diary. When finished Jimmy read it to me, "The chicks are very fuzzy. When we put them away, they walk in thin air." In another instance, Sharon, who seemed to have

run out of ideas while writing her story, went to discuss it with Mrs. Dixon. After a brief conference, she returned and announced to her neighbours, "Now I have to write where they live." She seemed pleased to have something to add to her story and set to work. Pamela suggested they could live on her street and Maureen suggested they live in woodblocks and lego and laughed at her own silliness. Sharon however, made up her own mind and decided to make her story characters live in Edmonton.

When reading children's stories, Mrs. Dixon's emphasis was on meaning and on appropriate language use. She accepted invented spelling but corrected errors which involved improper language use. For instance, in her diary entry Pamela had written, "I love chicks. They are cte (sic) they like to chrping (sic). No mention was made of the spelling errors but Mrs. Dixon asked Pamela if the word 'chirping' made sense in the context. She read the story so that Pamela could hear the language of her story and monitor her use of language. Pamela decided it didn't sound right and changed the word to 'chirp'.

How Stories were Used for Language Teaching and Learning

When examining the data, the transaction of meaning (Rosenblatt, 1978) was clearly Mrs. Dixon's aim when presenting texts to children. She interacted with children

constantly to ensure they understood the text and linked explanations to the students own life experiences. These interactions were usually oral, though sometimes responses to stories included a written component. This constant use of the oral mode to mediate meanings found in the written text was a central aspect of Mrs. Dixon's program. For example, after reading about a hummingbird's egg being the size of a pea, Mrs. Dixon went on to explain:

> T: In the summertime you eat those peas in a pod? Very tiny. That's a hummingbird. So a hummingbird has the tiniest egg.

Another time she read about baby birds being covered in down and elaborated on the meaning of down as follows:

> T: That's what the baby feathers are called -- that soft fluffy fur.
> St: down

The children had seen down on the chicks they had hatched in the classroom. By relating the text material to their own experience, Mrs. Dixon helped children integrate the information with their previous knowledge.

Mrs. Dixon strived to present language that was "meaningful, contextualized and social" (Goodman & Goodman, 1979, p. 141 borrowing a phrase from Halliday). The teacher intended that the stories presented would provide a context

for the experiential component of her language arts program. The story Red Hen and Her Chicks integrated the experiences of hatching chicks, baking bread, and examining assorted grains. Her thematic approach, the use of the oral mode to clarify and elaborate text information combined with the experiential aspects of her program was meant to help children relate the language of texts to their own life world. Sometimes she orally linked ideas they had presented in pre-reading discussions with those later found in texts. For instance, after a discussion about how various animals including birds keep warm, Mrs. Dixon paused while reading I Want to Know About...Birds of Prey to confirm children's earlier predictions:

> T: So you were right about birds having feathers. ...You were right about birds -- they build nests. Some of them on the ground and some of them build them high up in the trees. ...And some of them, you're right, they do fly south.

During story reading sessions, Mrs. Dixon solicited children's active participation. One way she did this was by slowing down or pausing while she read thus cueing participation through oral cloze (Holdaway, 1979). For example:

> T: (reading from text, The Tale of Tommy Nobody)

...the hen sat on her eggs until the eggs were ready to _____

Class: hatch.

T: (reading from the same book) ...he could feel himself_____

Class: falling.

Besides allowing children to become active participants, this activity helped children see that their predictions made sense in the text.

Sometimes Mrs. Dixon's questions encouraged children to make predictions about what was going to happen next. Predictions were confirmed by reading the text. For example, in the story The Tale of Tommy Nobody Mrs. Dixon had read about the difficulty one bird was having in learning to fly and she stopped the reading to ask:

T: But I'm having a problem here. How come this bird can't fly? You're telling me all the other stories you know. That's great.

St: It's having a big trouble.

T: It's having a big trouble.

St 2: His wing broke.

T: His wing is _____?

St 2: broken.

T: His wing is broken or maybe his wing is not

strong enough. Let's find out. (She read the text.)

Mrs. Dixon also had children participate by asking them questions as she read. These questions were often designed to see whether children were comprehending the text or to focus their attention on significant aspects of the text. For example:

T: What's making the egg crack? (while showing children a picture from the text, What's Inside?

Class: The nose, the nose.

Mrs. Dixon continued questioning to help children elaborate the information:

T: What do we call that nose?

Class: beak

T: What do we call that process?

Class: Pipping.

Text information was related to the children's previous experience whenever possible:

T: (reading from the book, I Want to Know About ...Baby Animals) ...Mother birds keep their eggs warm with their bodies.

T: (commenting) Where here we used an incubator

to keep the eggs warm.

T: (continues reading) ...Robins sit on their eggs for 14 days.

St: Holy!

T: Tell me how many days our chicken eggs had to sit.

Students respond with some saying "21", some "28".

T: 21

Mrs. Dixon felt the concrete experiences provided in her program were essential in developing children's understandings of the world (Tough, 1977). Mrs. Dixon felt that children's language reflected their experiences. This was aptly illustrated when the children observed Mrs. Dixon's mother baking bread:

T: There's about 10 cups of flour in the bowl right now.

Jimmy: She's adding the margarine.

T: She's adding the margarine right now.

Nelson: Holy! What a lot of margarine.!

Jimmy: You need a lot of margarine for this whole class.

St: She's adding eggs.

Ned: She's adding another egg.

T: How many eggs is she putting in?

Class: 2

Joe: Yeah, like Green Eggs and Ham.

Here the children translated their observations into language. Joe even related his observations to literature previously read in the classroom. Such spontaneous commentary was frequently encouraged. Children did not have to wait for questions or opportunities to predict before they could participate. Their comments during story reading sessions were welcomed and were usually followed up by Mrs. Dixon. For example, when reading I Want to Know About...Birds of Prey, she encouraged Todd to share his own background knowledge to help elaborate the meaning of the text:

Todd: At night time the owls always come for the mouses.
T: Todd can you tell us that again. I'm sorry, we're not being good listeners for you.
Todd: At night time the owls always comes out and he always looks for the mouse.
T: Why does he come out at night?
Todd: Cause they can see better.
T: They can see better. Cause you know they have very special _____?
Class: eyes

The above excerpt also shows that she focused on both aspects of oracy --speaking and listening. Mrs. Dixon insisted that the children listen to her and to each other.

Children's comments were acknowledged. During a discussion focusing on ways in which animals keep warm, Jimmy initiated the following exchange:

> Jimmy: Ducks can keep warm from the water sometimes. [child initiates]
>
> T: Ducks can keep warm, how do they do that? [teacher responds]
>
> Jimmy: They swim in the water. [child responds]
>
> T: They swim in the water? [teacher responds with question in voice]
>
> Jimmy: The water's cold and they keep on swimming and swimming and it gets warmer and warmer. [child elaborates]
>
> T: So they swim to keep warm? [teacher acknowledges]

Even though Mrs. Dixon had some difficulty understanding what Jimmy meant, it is a real conversation and her responses were gentle and motivating as she searched for his meaning.

Mrs. Dixon frequently gave children positive reinforcement for their use of expressive language with comments like such as, "What a good observation!" or " I really liked the words you used to say that." She

considered all their ideas seriously. This warm, supportive environment coupled with her firm belief that children used talk to make sense of the world created an atmosphere in which it appeared children felt free to communicate their ideas (Dixon, 1975). For example, the children were given many opportunities to observe the chicks which had been hatched in the classroom and were encouraged to discuss their observations with each other:

St 1: I like the black one.

St 2: Don't touch this one (pointing). It has a broken beak.

St 1: Look at this one. It's fuzzy.

St 2: This one has a broken beak, so don't touch it.

St 3: We can touch them but just not on the nose. Are we allowed to pick them up?

St 4: Yeah, but you can't right now...(inaudible).

St 1: Hey that's Blackie. I got a name for that black one.

Mrs. Dixon usually remained in the background during these discussions, allowing the children to negotiate their own meanings.

Language in Mrs. Dixon's classroom was embedded in on-going concerns. While watching the kneading of the dough during bread baking, Mrs Dixon helped children relate this

experience to the wider community. This provided an excellent example of a mediated learning experience (Feuerstein et al, 1980) between Mrs. Dixon and her students:

> T: She's kneading the bread so she gets all the flour in there. And she gets everything all mixed in it. [sharing and intentionality] Some of you kids, your mothers, your parents maybe don't use their hands to knead with. They have that machine that's got that little circle arm that looks like an arm and that kneads it for you. And you know when you go to the restaurant, especially if you've gone to _____ Pizza. They have a big machine and you can see it. They have a big sized blender. [transcendence]
>
> Class: nodding their heads (indicating they have seen the giant blender at this local pizza establishment) [reciprocity]

This was in direct contrast to the interaction pattern set up between the students and some of the guest teachers reading stories in Mrs. Dixon's room. Of the 4 guest teachers coming into Mrs. Dixon's room, only one attempted to elicit children's background knowledge. Control was a prime concern for all of them. It is perhaps to be expected

that these teachers behaved as they did. They had limited time in which to read their story. It is more difficult managing a class when one is unfamiliar with the children and with established classroom routines. Also, it may be more difficult to establish sharing and reciprocity in this situation. Interactions during the story reading were discouraged. Children were encouraged to listen quietly. Their relevant comments during the story reading were often ignored:

> Guest T 4: (reading) ... dinosaurs have been gone for 60 million years.
> Todd: Dinosaurs are dead. [attempts to establish reciprocity but he is ignored]
> Guest T 4: (completes the reading and asks) Are there really dinosaurs out there?

Todd had already answered this question. The sequel to Patrick's Dinosaur was then read. Before beginning, the guest teacher said, "Let's see what happened to Patrick's dinosaur". Behaving as they would with Mrs. Dixon, several children tried to explain what happened throughout the reading but the guest teacher ignored their attempts to share their responses to her initial question.

Sometimes during the story reading Mrs. Dixon had children search for words in text to further their word recognition skills. For example, while reading

cooperatively (i.e. teacher and students were reading the story orally) the Unicorn version of Red Hen and her Chicks, Mrs. Dixon had the children stop their reading and asked:

> T: Okay, I am thinking of a place that she took the wheat to be ground up. It's the _____?
> Several Students: Mill.
> T: Very good. Can you find the word 'mill' on this page?
> (Children can be heard sounding out the "m" as they find the word 'mill'.)
> T: There is a word that rhymes with 'mill' on this page.
> St: will
> T: Oh that was fast. I thought it would take you longer than that. Can you read me the question with the word 'will'
> (The children begin to read the page in chorus.)
> T: Just the sentence that has the magic word 'will'.
> Class: (reading) "I will," said another chick.

Here words were highlighted in a meaningful context. Several word recognition strategies such as prediction and phonics were employed to help students decode unknown words. Then the highlighted words were put back into context.

Mrs. Dixon used a whole language approach when teaching word recognition strategies. She taught phonics to the whole class using songs. Each child had the words for the songs in front of him/her. Each song stressed a particular sound. For example, the following song stressed the 'soft c' sound:

> The circus, is here, the circus is here,
> The circus comes to our city.
> The tents are here, the animals near,
> The wagons so gay and so pretty.

Children first encountered the words in text, as the words of the song were read cooperatively a couple of times. They discussed the song's content. Then the songs were sung. Only when the children were very familiar with the songs, did Mrs. Dixon highlight words containing the sound to be stressed. These lessons always involved the entire class.

Mrs. Dixon read stories to children to help extend children's knowledge base about the theme under study. She made constant use of the oral mode to ensure that children understood text. Children were encouraged to participate in the reading through use of strategies such as oral cloze. Mrs. Dixon's acknowledgement of children's comments throughout the reading gave further encouragement to children' participation in the reading.

The Children Read Stories

In this section of the analysis, the various contexts in which the children read stories will be analyzed. The children read to a variety of audiences including their parents, their teacher , each other, the school principal, grade four students and visitors to the classroom. Occasionally they read stories by themselves without an audience.

What Stories Were Read

The children mainly read stories from their Unicorn reader and books from the classroom library which were read as part of Mrs. Dixon's home reading program. Many of the center activities involved story reading of texts accompanied by audio tapes. The children also read their own compositions and occasionally the compositions of other students. They wrote a diary to which Mrs. Dixon responded.

Why and How Stories Were Read

The Home Reading Program

Mrs. Dixon believed that in order to fully develop a child's literacy, the parents must be involved. She facilitatied this involvement through a home reading program. At the beginning of the school year, Mrs. Dixon met with parents to explain her philosophy and the role parents played in the child's literacy development. She then outlined her home reading program. The first stage involved parent and child creating a book. The parents scribed for children beneath illustrations which might have been drawn by the child or which the child had cut from magazines. These books were then brought to school to be shared. In the second stage, the children were sent home with books chosen by the teacher to be read to parents. Completed books were returned with a note indicating that the book had been read. The children then received another book. Mrs. Dixon started by selecting books for the children to ensure successful reading. Initially the children were given patterned books such as I can See... which contained single words naming the picture (e.g. a ball, a table). Some of the books contained phrases describing the picture (e.g. under the table, under the

chair) and some contained complete sentences describing the picture (e.g. The girl is skipping.)

When Mrs. Dixon felt the children had gained some proficiency with their reading, they were allowed to select their own books' from the classroom library. Occasionally she directed children to books she felt they could successfully handle. Children kept track of the number of books they read and received a 'prize' for every tenth book they read (e.g. a book or a pencil). Mrs. Dixon felt her home reading program provided extra reading practice for the children and said she noticed that active participants in the home reading program made better progress than children whose participation was more sporadic (Appendix G). She also felt that the home reading program was beneficial when reporting student progress. Parents involved in the home reading program were highly aware of their child's strengths and weaknesses. As a result she did not have to spend a lot of the interview time outlining the child's progress to date, but could concentrate on discussing ways in which both the school and home could support the child with his/her literacy development.

Cooperative Reading

Both the songs for phonics instruction and reader stories were read cooperatively in a whole class setting. In this type of reading the teacher slightly slowed her

reading rate so children could join in. Because the entire class was involved, children could join in the reading when able to and could stop reading without feeling any pressure. Phonics songs were read cooperatively a couple of times when initially introduced to ensure the children felt comfortable reading the words. Then Mrs. Dixon taught them the tune. These songs were reviewed quite frequently. Besides teaching children the songs, Mrs. Dixon often used these songs as the basis for a brief phonics lesson requiring the children to find all the words in the song containing a particular sound.

Reader stories were also read cooperatively. The children seemed to expect this as can be seen from the following:

> StT: I'm going to read a story. It's in your reader. I'm going to ask you to take your reader out right now and follow along. It's called <u>The Red Hen and Her Chicks</u>.

It took some time before everyone in the class had found the story. Just before beginning, the student teacher reminded them:

> StT: I want you to follow along with your eyes as I read.

Rather than just following silently, the children attempted to read along with her. She read too quickly and the children could not keep up. Mrs. Dixon intervened and suggested that she read more slowly. She did and the children read along with her. This lesson was preceded by a discussion about bread making. During the reading, questions focussed on comprehension and vocabulary:

StT: She's cutting the wheat. What's that she's using for cutting the wheat?
Jimmy: A knife.
St: A round knife that goes like this.
(indicating shape with his hands)
Jimmy: Like this. (also indicating shape)
StT: Yeah it goes round like this. That's called a scythe.

Four days later, the student teacher asked children to compare the reader version of the story Red Hen and Her Chicks to one she had just read. The children had difficulty remembering the reader version of the text. Perhaps the children's focus was on decoding rather than meaning when engaged in this activity. Mrs. Dixon suggested they read the story again and led the class in the cooperative reading rather than letting them read it silently. Though the initial purpose for this reading was to recall the story, during the reading Mrs. Dixon had the

children focus on elements in the text as shown in the following exchange:

> T: On this page there is a question. Can you find me the question? Can you find me the question mother asks?
> Pamela: "Who will help me plant the wheat?"
> T: Okay. We have to be very careful because at the end there is a __?
> St: Question mark.

Some of her questions had children focus on individual words:

> T: I would like you to find the word 'cut' on this page. See how many you can find on this page.
> Greg: 1
> Todd: 3
> T: Can you tell me what sound the 'C' makes?
> Class: /k/ (indicating sound)
> T: Like in candy cane (from their phonics lesson earlier in the day). You print it with a 'C' but it has the sound of /k/.

During the cooperative reading, Mrs. Dixon moved around checking to make sure students were following along in their

texts. Two or three children had some difficulty with this and she helped them find the right place. After the reading was completed the student teacher continued with her lesson and had the children compare this story with the one she had read.

In the previous example, children cooperatively read text for the purpose of recalling the story so they could compare it to another version. In other instances of cooperative reading the only purpose given before reading was, "I want to hear how you can read." Although it appeared that Mrs. Dixon expected children to comprehend the material they read she did not always make this purpose explicit before children read the text.

Paired Reading

Sometimes children were assigned a partner and asked to read a story in pairs. Occasionally this was done with a grade 4 partner who was to help the grade one student but usually the children were partnered with one of their classmates. The partners were always assigned by Mrs. Dixon. During my observations, in all instances but one, the teacher's purpose for this paired reading seemed to be giving children practice in oral reading. Paired sessions usually began with the following statement:

T: Today, I'm going to group you in two's and you're

going to read the story with your partner.

Most of the children read cooperatively. Occasionally they took turns reading to each other. The reading was always oral.

Not all of these partnerships were successful. Sometimes the children simply didn't get along and spent time arguing:

Lorna: You read to me first.
Greg: No, you read to me first. Not like that! I can't hear you. I'm telling on you.
Lorna: Okay, you have to read first.
Greg: No, you do. You always say girls go first.
Lorna: Boys go first.

This arguing continued throughout their reading. Mrs. Dixon twice tried to get them on task but they only continued reading for a few minutes after her intervention, and then had another disagreement. However, when they did read, they monitored each other on the basis of meaning. For example:

Lorna: (reading)...he shoved over the fence.
Greg: He shoved over the fence?
Lorna: (checking text) I said jumped!

Sometimes the pairings were unsuccessful because neither partner was proficient enough at the reading to allow them to make sense of the text. During the reading of the rebus story Little Red Riding Hood, both Bill and Lorna had so many difficulties with the reading that they finally gave up. The class had been given a brief explanation of how a rebus story worked. This had not been sufficient and they read the text ignoring the pictures and of course it made no sense. At other times with rebus stories they had difficulty deciding what pictures represented:

Lorna: That's not her mother. What is that?

Lorna did not try to see if the word 'mother' would fit the context. The reading became an oral activity which lacked meaning. The level of the text also presented problems and the children gave up and returned to their seats. Because of the demands on her time, it was difficult for the teacher to oversee everything that was happening. The children may have handled the task more successfully if the books had initially been introduced as a shared reading activity, where the text was enlarged and read cooperatively (Doake, 1981; Holdaway, 1979) a few times before the children were expected to handle it on their own.

Only once during my observations were the children given books for the purpose of using these to find some information. This occurred during a lesson under the

direction of the student teacher. The children were paired by Mrs Dixon and the student teacher gave the following directions:

> StT: I want you to find a book from the library, look at the pictures. You might want to read some of the words too and see if you can find about 3 things you learned from the book about chicks and chickens and then we'll share them. Okay, we have a box at the back with books about chicks. In some, the whole book isn't about chicks. I've marked off the pages you should look at. You can look at the pictures. You can look at the words. Come up with 3 things that you've learned from what you've looked at.

The children looked at their book and then told Mrs. Dixon the 3 things they learned. Using a language experience approach, Mrs. Dixon wrote these on chart paper. The next day, she had children read their contributions from the chart. Children showed the book they had used to obtain the information and Mrs. Dixon showed the class the pictures in the book.

> T: These are the pictures that they had to work with. Okay, let's see what these girls learned from looking at the pictures.

Mrs. Dixon did not credit the girls with obtaining any information from the text. Yet, the girls had accessed text the previous day:

> Sharon: Yes, we can read it if we want.
> Maureen: I'm not reading the whole thing though.
> Sharon: Okay. Let's read about this though.

On another occasion I observed the children working with grade 4 partners. The student teacher had shown the class a series of pictures illustrating the process of hatching an egg. Each partnership was assigned one of the pictures. The grade 1 student was to copy the picture and the grade 4 student was to make up text to go along with the picture. These would be put together to make a book for the classroom library. When everyone was finished, the children were directed to bring up their pictures in the correct sequence. The grade 1 student was to show his drawing while the grade 4 student read the text. The task had been defined to leave the grade 1 student out of the literacy aspects of the task. It appeared that the grade one student was not expected to be able to read the text. This is contrary to findings that many children can process print even before they enter school (Y. Goodman, 1980; Taylor, 1983; Teale, 1984). The children redefined the situation. Some of the grade 4 students had taught their grade 1 partner to read the text and they did so proudly. Others, seeing this, quietly

coached their grade one partner in the reading so that he/she could do the reading when their turn came.

At a later date when the children were paired with a grade 4 student to read the story Jack and the Beanstalk in their Unicorn reader, I observed Sharon and her grade 4 partner. When Sharon had severe difficulties reading the text, the grade 4 student suggested that he read to her first and that she read next. This is what they did. However, Sharon still had a lot of difficulties reading the text. Her partner was quite patient with her, sometimes pointing out that she had previously read the word, sometimes supplying the word and sometimes giving her hints based on meaning. For example when Sharon was stuck on the word, 'clouds' he said, "It's up in the sky." Sharon eventually completed the reading. This type of paired reading allowed better opportunities for monitoring an individual child's reading than did the full class cooperative reading sessions.

Reading in Centers

Mrs. Dixon introduced 12 centers and the student teacher introduced another 6 (Appendix H) to be worked on while the 'Chick' unit was in progress. Half of these involved reading a book or a poem. Children were to read these stories some of which were accompanied by an audio tape to support the child's reading. Then children were

given opportunities to respond to the selection. In some cases the story provided the pattern for a creative writing exercise. In others the story was used to stimulate artistic expression. One story became the basis for an exercise on rhyming words. In one center, the directions were simply to read the story to a partner. The emphasis of the story reading in centers, in contrast to the cooperative and paired reading, was on the child's response to literature. Silent reading sometimes occurred in center work as the children were free to decide whether they wanted to read text silently to themselves or orally with a partner.

Mrs. Dixon stipulated what was to be done at each of the centers. The children were left to decide which centers they wished to complete and could also choose the order of completion. Sometimes convenience dictated that Mrs. Dixon complete some of the centers with groups of children, but otherwise the children were free to make their own choices.

Stories completed at the writing center were often shared. At the end of the morning, the class came together and read their completed stories to each other. Some of the children were shy and read so quietly they couldn't be heard. The audience however, remained quietly attentive.

On one occasion the children shared their stories with the principal and she rewarded their efforts with stickers. Completed stories were placed in the classroom library where

children could peruse the compositions at their leisure. The children did not often choose to spend spare time in the library, though occasionally children were observed using their free time in this environment. Mrs. Dixon usually suggested that children go to the toy center to re-enact stories previously read when they completed their projects.

When Stories Were Read

Children who were motivated to use class time for reading had ample opportunity to read throughout the day in Mrs. Dixon's classroom. Some of these reading activities involved the whole class. Cooperative reading was a whole class activity and was engaged in on 3 occasions during my observations. On 5 occasions, the children were teamed with a partner for paired reading. Of the 18 centers introduced for the Chick unit, exactly half involved reading a book or poem. Many of these were read with a partner. Sometimes the reading was supported by use of an audio tape. Many of the center activities involved children in writing. Figure 1 is an example of such writing:

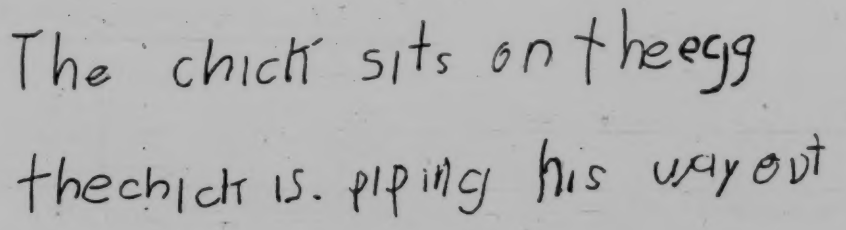


Figure 1: A Sample of Student Writing

The children usually read their stories to their teacher in one-to-one situations. The children could also often be heard reading their stories to themselves or to a friend while they were composing. They were usually given an opportunity to read their stories to their classmates in a sharing session. Diary entries were read to their teacher and the children read the teacher's responses.

When center activities and math assignments were completed, children were given free time to spend in the toy center or the class library. Though the toy center attracted greater numbers, occasionally children chose to read books in the class library during this time. At the toy center, children were encouraged to incorporate the stories being read into their play. All activities at the toy center were oral. I never observed the children using print in the toy center. Materials were not readily available to allow them to do this.

The home reading program encouraged children to read books after school. Only some of the children made regular use of this program, others rarely took out books. (Appendix, H)

Children who wished to read, were able to do so throughout large parts of the day but some children read minimally in school and at home. In interview, Mrs. Dixon said she didn't have core centers that everyone was expected

to complete. Children not wishing to expend effort reading could simply avoid those centers requiring a great deal of reading. As a result, some children had little personal reading experience.

Goodman and Goodman (1979) propose that classrooms must be filled with "lots of written language pupils will need and want to read" (p. 151). There was little use of functional print in Mrs. Dixon's classroom. She often wrote out the activities that children were expected to work on throughout the day and the children did refer to this during the course of the day. Other than that, there were no notices or messages that children were expected to read or needed to read in order to complete their activities.

Children did not get a chance to read while stories were being read to them. While I was there, enlarged texts (Holdaway, 1979) were never used in a teaching situation though there were several of these in the classroom. The enlarged texts produced while I was in the classroom were read once to allow children to hear each other's contributions. They were not again read with the whole class or with small groups while I was present.

Summary

Mrs. Dixon strongly believed that a rich learning environment is a key factor in the learning process. By applying for various grants, she had acquired books,

magazines and various puppets and toys.. The classroom also had a computer. Books, both student produced and professionally published texts, were kept in an attractive classroom library. Children were given time daily to select books from this library for the home reading program. Other than this, books in the library were not often accessed by the children during the time I was observing. This was in direct contrast to the toy center which children frequently chose as a free time activity. Here, children were encouraged to use the toys to respond to stories read in class.

Mrs. Dixon also believed that to learn effectively, children must be provided with a broad experiential base. She taught using a thematic approach and provided children with many experiences such as hatching chicks, bread baking and writing with quills as she developed the unit I observed. Themes centered around stories found in the Unicorn Reading Series.

Mrs. Dixon read stories to children daily. These story reading sessions nearly always involved the entire class. Her aims for reading to students ranged from developing children's knowledge base of the theme under study to developing children's love of books. The transaction of meaning was Mrs. Dixon's main aim during these book sharing sessions though she sometimes used the stories to teach word identification strategies. She

constantly used the oral mode to ensure children understood text by asking students questions to help them focus on relevant information, by elaborating information from the text, and by relating text to the children's own life worlds.

She solicited children's active participation in the story reading. Students were urged to bring to school books related to the theme. Mrs. Dixon read these as enthusiastically and with as much discussion as she did the books she selected. While reading, she encouraged children to predict using oral cloze. A couple of times children participated in the story reading by placing appropriate figures on the flannel board as they were introduced in the story. Children were able to initiate discussions during the story reading. Mrs. Dixon often used their spontaneous remarks to help students develop feelings of competence by complementing the children on their good observations. This was not the case with the guest teachers who read stories to the class. They dominated the discussions and usually ignored students unsolicited comments.

Besides discussions which were conducted both during and after the story reading, Mrs. Dixon had children respond to stories using comparison circles. With these, children noted similarities and differences between different versions of the same story while the teacher wrote these on the board. The class also created symbols for some of the

stories. These were put on the story sweater. Some of the hands on activities were also a response to stories read in class. For example, the bread baking was in response to the story Red Hen and Her Chicks.

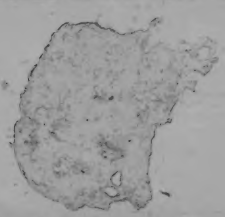
There was ample opportunity for students in Mrs. Dixon's classroom to read to a variety of audiences if they chose to do so. They had access to their Unicorn readers, books from the class library and books in many of the centers. They were also given opportunities to read their own compositions and those of their classmates. Mrs. Dixon set up situations so students could read to her, to each other, to students in other grades, to classroom visitors and to their parents through the home reading program. Not all students took advantage of these opportunities. Mrs. Dixon had little control over some aspects of her program. For instance, some children did little reading through the home reading program despite her encouragement to try and finish the book they currently had at home.

Sometimes children had difficulty with the reading task Mrs. Dixon set up. Several times during my observations, Mrs. Dixon had children read stories from their Unicorn readers cooperatively. Some of the children had difficulty following the print in their readers as the class read. Big books were not used to assist children with eye-voice matching. Occasionally, children were directed to read a story with a partner. Some of these partnerships were

unsuccessful because the text was too difficult for each partner, or because the partners didn't get along and spent most of their time arguing. Mrs. Dixon did move around giving assistance but she was unable to keep up with the demand. Though comprehension of text was obviously expected during these sessions, the focus seemed to be oral reading competency.

When the children were asked comprehension questions after these cooperative and paired reading sessions, they were not often sent back to text to confirm their answers. Once, when children were asked to use books to find information about chicks, Mrs. Dixon assumed that students had used only the pictures to access the required information. This is contrary to findings that many children process print even before school.

However, the reading in centers seemed to have a comprehension focus. Children were expected to make a response to stories read at the centers and an appropriate response necessitated understanding of text. Responses often took the form of the writing of a story or poem and children were given an opportunity to share these with their classmates. Approximately half of the centers involved reading published texts. Mrs. Dixon stated she did not have core centers that she expected everyone to complete. Hence, children who wished to avoid reading could easily do so.



CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, MAJOR CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

The literature revealed that teachers with a whole language philosophy viewed literacy development as an extension of oral language learning. That is, they believe that children learned best in warm, supportive environments wherein they transacted with print used in functional ways. In these classrooms, the focus of all literacy activities was meaning and children's approximations towards this goal were reinforced. This meant that reading materials must be whole texts which were meaningful and relevant to the learners. Learning groups were formed on the basis of interests rather than ability and changed as children's interests changed. The teachers in these classrooms acted as mediators to facilitate children's literacy development by motivating them, by arranging the environment and by providing children with appropriate materials and timely experiences. Notwithstanding this, teachers with a whole language philosophy recognized that the learners ultimately decided which aspects of the literacy event they would learn and at what pace (Goodman & Goodman, 1981).

Despite recent interest in implementation of whole language programs (K. Goodman, 1986; Newman, 1983), there

are few studies that reveal what successful strategies teachers with a whole language philosophy use in their classrooms to further children's literacy development. The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze how a grade one teacher with a whole language philosophy used story reading in her language arts program to further her students' literacy development. This study described what stories were presented, who read them, why they were read and how they were used for language teaching and learning. Interactions which occurred before, during and after the story reading were described and analyzed as were any responses the children and/or teacher made to the story reading.

Major Conclusions

The Oral Language Environment

Looking at the learning milieu as revealed by the data in Chapter Four, what emerged was a picture of a classroom in which we saw dynamic interactions among the participants. Mrs. Dixon had succeeded in creating a positive, purposeful and supportive learning environment in which students were equal partners in the oral discourse. Mrs. Dixon obviously believed in a strong oral language base and she set up many situations which gave children opportunities to engage in meaningful talk. She exerted considerable effort to provide

children with concrete experiences which provided a basis for discussion. There was a great deal of talk while children worked in centers. Stories Mrs. Dixon read in class were accompanied and followed by discussion. Discussions could be both teacher and child initiated. She encouraged children to engage critically with ideas they encountered. During discussions, Mrs. Dixon furthered children's learning by using such mediational strategies as elaboration and relating topics discussed to children's own worlds. This was in keeping with successful language development strategies used by parents (Snow, 1983; Wells, 1986). The oral language children used was purposeful. They were encouraged to talk about themselves and their own lives. Mrs. Dixon certainly facilitated children's growth through oral language.

The Literacy Environment

As with her oral language program, Mrs. Dixon tried to enthuse her students about literature. She supplemented her basal reading program with a well stocked library. She read to children daily and invited teachers from other classrooms to be guest readers to her class. A student teacher also read stories to the class during the period of my observations. Children were able to read to various audiences. These audiences included Mrs. Dixon, each other, the principal, older students and their parents through the

home reading program. Children were able to read a variety of materials such as their basal reader, library books, their own writing and books in centers which were often accompanied by audio tapes to support the child's reading.

Reading to Children

Mrs Dixon read both narrative and expository texts to her students daily. She also read children's creative writing. Children's own compositions were usually read in one-to-one situations. With one or two exceptions, all book readings were conducted with the whole class. Mrs Dixon read books of her own choosing as well as books children brought from home. If the books children brought were relevant to the theme, she incorporated them into the thematic unit. Books unrelated to the theme were read to encourage children with their own reading. Reading books to children to develop their appreciation of good literature was most often an implicit intention of the story reading situation. The most frequently stated purpose for reading to children was to help them develop their knowledge schema about the theme under study. The student teacher shared this explicit intention when she read to the students. The guest teachers read only narratives and their expressed purpose for reading to the children was to share a favorite story with the class. All books read with the children were normal size. Big books were not read with the children

during the time of my observations, though there were some available in the classroom.

When reading to children, both Mrs. Dixon and the student teacher interacted with the children in similar ways. Before reading they usually elicited children's background knowledge. Throughout the story reading, they constantly used the oral mode to ensure children understood the text. They solicited children's active participation in the reading through oral cloze. Children were encouraged to initiate discussions. Their comments were acknowledged and often elaborated.

In direct contrast to this, were the interactions between the children and the guest teachers. Only one of the four guests attempted to elicit children's background knowledge. Control seemed to be their prime concern and interactions during the story reading were discouraged. Children were asked to listen quietly. Any comments children made during the story reading were usually ignored.

The Children Read Stories

The children read stories from their Unicorn reader, books from the classroom library, books accompanying many of the centers and their own compositions. They sometimes read as an entire class, sometimes they were paired up to read with a classmate or with an older student. They also read as part of a home reading program. The children did little

personal reading. That is, they were not often observed reading for their own pleasure or in pursuit of answers to questions of personal interest.

Cooperative Reading. Reader stories and songs for phonics instruction were read cooperatively. This meant that teacher and the whole class read a particular selection together orally thus treating children as if they were all at the same developmental level. This was not the case and some of the children had difficulty following along in their reader. These children appeared to be at the emergent reading level (McKenzie, 1977). That is, they were developing early concepts about literacy and had not developed sufficient skills to read the selection fluently. Other children were at the early reading stage and were able to read the text more quickly than this method allowed. This situation could have been greatly helped by the use of an enlarged text. During shared reading a pointer could have been used to help eye-voice matching, increase sight word vocabularies, encourage early reading behaviours and demonstrate directionality (Holdaway, 1979). Children were usually required to read stories orally rather than silently. As a result the children perhaps viewed reading to be an oral activity focussing on decoding rather than as an activity concerned with the apprehension of meaning. Many of the comprehension activities following the reading were completed orally with the whole class. However, on two

occasions, I observed children answering one or two questions about a story by writing answers in their scribblers. At this time many reread the story silently on their own or orally with a partner.

Paired Reading with Peers. Sometimes children were asked to read a text with a partner. Mrs. Dixon always selected the partners. Despite this, some of the partnerships ran into difficulties. Occasionally the partners did not get along and time was spent arguing rather than reading. More often, neither partner could read the selection with enough proficiency to make the reading meaningful. Reading practice was usually the stated purpose for these paired readings and the reading nearly always was oral.

I observed the children on only one occasion reading books for the expressed purpose of seeking information. However, on that occasion, Mrs. Dixon assumed that most of the children had gleaned information from the pictures rather than from the text.

Paired Reading with Older Students. Twice, during my observations, the grade one students were paired with students from a grade four classroom. Although some of the students experienced difficulties with the reading they had to do, this situation provided opportunities for immediate help both with children's comprehension and decoding. Once

again the reading was oral and children were not directed to read the story for any meaningful purpose.

Reading in the Home Reading Program. Mrs. Dixon felt parents should be involved in their child's literacy development and she facilitated this involvement through a home reading program. She met with parents early in the year to emphasize their importance in their child's literacy development and to explain how her home reading program worked. Other than initially helping their children create their own book by scribing a dictated text, parents were basically expected to listen to their children read a book and were then asked to sign a paper certifying that the book had been read. Again the focus seemed to be on oral reading.

Despite special meetings with parents, some children only used the home reading program sporadically. Mrs. Dixon felt children who made regular use of the home reading program progressed faster than those who did not. She felt frustrated by her inability to get all children to participate more regularly.

Reading in Centers. Approximately half of the centers required children to read a book. Many of these books were accompanied by audio-tapes to support the children's reading. The reading in centers could be done orally or silently, alone or with a partner. These center activities

required the children to respond to the story in some way and hence the emphasis when reading was on comprehension.

Mrs. Dixon did not have any core centers she expected all children to complete, nor did she expect children to complete a required number of centers. Therefore, children who wished to avoid reading when working at centers could easily do so.

Reading their own Compositions. The children usually read their compositions to their teacher in one-to-one situations. Sometimes they simply wanted to share their creations with her. At other times, they sought her advice about some aspect of the composing process. Reading to a friend was often done for the same reasons. Mrs. Dixon also set aside time for the children to read their finished works to their classmates in a sharing session. The children co-operated, but these sessions lacked the spontaneity and camaraderie displayed in the more informal sharing sessions. During these formal sharing sessions, Mrs. Dixon had the children listen attentively even when the reader was reading so quietly he/she could not be heard.

Comparing the Oral and Literacy Environments

Mrs. Dixon's program provided students with a stimulating oral environment which incorporated all the features recommended by Holdaway (1979) and Wells (1986). Children were immersed in a supportive milieu where oral

language was used to fulfill different functions in purposeful ways. They were gently encouraged to participate in the talk going on around them and assistance was provided when they ran into difficulties.

By frequently reading stories to them and discussing these in meaningful ways, Mrs. Dixon helped children who had not already done so, develop many features of a 'literacy set'. For example, by listening to stories, children developed high expectations of print (motivational factors), familiarity with written dialect ((linguistic factors), and essential strategies for handling written language (operational factors) (Holdaway, 1979). However, orthographic factors, were rarely focussed on for the students who needed help in this area. Unlike oral language, there was little meaningful use of print in her classroom. I did not observe the use of big books in the program to model reading and help children engage in reading from emergent to fluent reading. Messages, information and news items were communicated orally. Materials were not made readily available for the incorporation of print into play at the toy center. Directions for use of the centers were presented orally. Despite her emphasis on meaning when using the oral mode, Mrs. Dixon rarely gave children a meaningful purpose for reading. Thus perhaps, they were more likely to view their own reading as a decoding process rather than as a meaning based activity. By not focussing

on meaning, children often tried to predict words on the basis of sound clues. When texts were too difficult this strategy broke down and the reading was abandoned.

When dealing with children orally, Mrs. Dixon allowed discussions in varied size groupings. She often had children first discuss something in small groups and then had them bring their ideas to the large group. When expecting children to read, she almost always dealt with the whole class at the same time and expected every child to be at the same developmental level. By constantly having children read in whole class situations, Mrs. Dixon was unable to provide children with help when needed as there were too many requests for assistance. Children at very early stages could not participate and those at the fluent level had to slow down considerably.

Implications for Teaching

It takes a long time for research to filter into the school system. At present, many early childhood classes are changing from a skills approach to a process or a whole language orientation of literacy teaching. For many teachers this is not an easy task. There are limited funds available for inservice programs. Also, elementary teachers are expected to be knowledgeable in a wide variety of areas and inservice programs often compete for a teacher's time.

Mrs. Dixon has both attended and conducted inservice sessions. In recent years, her attempts to individualize learning has led to the development of an excellent learning environment where students' talk is highly valued and constantly encouraged. We now have strategies for early literacy teaching which would enable her to provide an equally individualized developmental reading program. Suggestions for this will be offered in terms of modelling fluent reading and organizing for individual instruction.

One of the most powerful strategies is big book sharing (Holdaway, 1979). Big book sharing should essentially be social and enjoyable and involve "the whole class regardless of individual ability levels" (Juliebo, 1987, p. 4). Holdaway suggests that big books can be either commercially produced or teacher made using chart paper. To save teacher time, children could add illustrations to books produced on chart paper. When using this method, teachers read from enlarged texts displaying print that can be easily seen by all students. A pointer is used during reading to help students develop insights into the one-to-one relationship between spoken and written words, learn directionality and develop sight word vocabularies. By letting children use the following strategies identified by Doake (1985), children are encouraged to participate in the reading:

1. Mumble reading - When using this strategy, children attempt to read along using an indecipherable mumble. As

children become more familiar with the story being read, their mumbles become more intelligible with words from the story which carry meaning being the first to become distinguishable.

2. Cooperative reading - Here the children read along with the story reader as much as they can.

3. Completion reading - This strategy occurs when the story reader pauses at various times throughout the reading to let children finish reading a phrase or sentence.

4. Echo reading - When using this strategy, children repeat a phrase or sentence immediately after it has been read.

The use of enlarged texts provides many opportunities to discuss written words and examine their orthographic features. For instance, masks can be used to encourage prediction from meaning and initial graphic clues as in the following:

"The frog said he would j [ ]."

Alternately, the words to some books could be printed on overhead transparencies. These 'books' could be read by progressively unmasking the print as it was read, once again allowing children to make predictions based on meaning and/or letter information. Children can be induced to predict vocabulary based on meaning and/or picture cues. This can be accomplished when copying stories on chart paper

by leaving blanks in places where prediction could readily occur. For example:

"You really may take,

Another piece of ____." (picture cue)

By leaving out a two or three word phrase, discussions could center around words and the spaces between them. For instance:

"The children were swimming ___ ____ _____."

To assist in the development of sight vocabularies, children could be asked to point to certain words in familiar texts. Teacher questions could help children identify strategies that can be used to help them with word identification.

To help children focus, Holdaway suggests making a sliding mask from cardboard to highlight words or letters being discussed as in Figure 2:

Figure 2: A Sliding Mask

Rereading of texts would occur on request and children would be given time to explore texts on their own, choosing from either enlarged texts or normal sized versions. Some might choose to share these with a friend, some might decide to take texts home to share with their family.

Recently, in England, a group of classroom teachers during an inservice on big book sharing began to experiment with shared writing (McKenzie, 1985). This activity grows out of the shared reading experience and provides opportunities to teach the craft of writing. It is a collaborative activity in which the teacher not only acts as scribe as in a language experience approach, but actively guides children in the production of text. Through her comments and questions, the teacher makes various writing techniques explicit. According to McKenzie, shared writing could be developed around describing school activities and events, language play such as tongue twisters, extending stories, poem or songs children know, creating new stories, writing reports about topics under study and relating to particular children. Shared writing is not meant to replace writing children do throughout the day, but is intended as a teaching vehicle in which children learn about both the composing process and mechanical aspects of writing.

Holdaway (1980) offers excellent strategies for developing an individualized reading program. This does not mean involving children in isolated programs for which they

require individual instruction. He conceives the central aspect of an individualized program to center around children selecting their own reading texts from a wide range of materials matching their interests and abilities. In such a program, children must be allowed to operate at their own pace and set their own goals. They are given time to communicate feelings and insights gained through reading.

Holdaway makes some practical suggestions to assist teachers in implementing such a program. He suggests dividing the language arts period into four major parts as follows:

1. Opening activities: This period would involve a brief sharing session in which relevant information is passed on, daily plans are made and may occasionally include a brief lesson on some area of skill development relevant to the whole class.
2. Quiet time: A quiet period for reading or study. The time allotment for this phase will vary with the age and maturity of the children. The time may be gradually increased as children show they are ready for it. Several activities, such as children responding to books they finished reading at home, might actually be going on during this phase but the understanding must be that distractions are kept to a minimum.

The teacher always uses this time for individual student conferences. Holdaway suggests that five to six children be

interviewed each day and notes that this usually necessitates conferences last no longer than four to six minutes. He states that these conferences provide opportunities for the child "to share an enthusiasm with the teacher, or display competence in purposeful oral reading" (p. 55). They provide teachers opportunities to get to know their students so they can "diagnose individual difficulties, offer brief but effective guidance and enter the reading enthusiasms of the children" (p. 55).

Both teacher and students should keep records outlining the students' reading progress. The student's reading log should list the books read and the dates. There should be a space for children to state their opinion of the book read, as well as a space where they can write a brief self-evaluation such as telling whether they easily understood the text or giving a brief description of the type of difficulty they encountered. For example they might comment that the book had some words which were hard to read. Children might also occasionally include in this log a list of words they want to learn. The teacher's conference log should include titles of books read by the student and some comment about the child's strengths and weaknesses as well as a brief description of any action taken to assist child with his/her literacy development. Holdaway outlines the following steps for these conferences:

a) Establishing rapport through some friendly remark or question to set the child at ease.

b) Allowing the child to discuss some aspect of the book he/she wants to discuss.

c) Asking one or two general questions about the book's theme or about characterization.

d) Listening to the child read a short passage he/she has selected to share with you.

e) Check student's reading log and make pertinent entries into the teacher's conference log.

f) Encourage and guide child to appropriate reading materials. Make arrangements for special skills instruction when necessary. Most skills instruction would be done with a group of children displaying similar needs.

These reading conferences would often extend into the following phase.

3. Activity time: During this time, children would work on independent projects in response to the literature they have experienced. These projects should help "to deepen understanding and encourage the assimilation and integration of ideas" (p. 58). The range of activities might include reading another book about the same topic or by the same author, creative writing projects, oral activities such as using the tape recorder to develop radio or TV programs, preparing dramatic presentations or expressing oneself through art or music.

4. Closing session: At this time children come together to serve as an audience for each other's presentations or to debate issues which have arisen from books read.

Thus, through the use of community big book sessions and individualized reading students can be provided with a program that both stimulates their individual interests and meets their developmental needs. The teacher is also provided with a variety of milieus where longitudinal evaluation can be facilitated.

Children must also be provided with library time during which they could freely select books for leisure reading. This time would be accompanied by story readings emphasizing the enjoyment to be derived from reading books. Perhaps children would be more willing to read books during free time or through the home reading program if they viewed the story experience as being one which led them into a magical land of enchantment.

Suggestions for Further Research

The results of this study suggested directions for further research.

1. There is little research documenting the successful strategies used by teachers with a whole language philosophy to develop and further oracy and literacy in their students. It is suggested that the study be replicated with a larger sample to see if similar patterns emerge.
2. This study might be carried out at other grade levels to see what successful strategies are used with children at various stages of development.
3. Classroom teachers are currently experiencing a paradigm shift in reading instruction moving from a focus on skills to a process or whole language orientation. Studies could examine the differences in children's literacy development when receiving instruction in either paradigm.
4. Research results have long documented the benefits of a process or whole language orientation to literacy teaching. It has taken a long time for these results to filter into classroom practice. Studies could examine the ways in which teachers change their beliefs about how to teach and how they develop the necessary skills and strategies to implement new methodologies.

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APPENDIX A

Holdaway's Literacy Set

Holdaway's Literacy Set

A. MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS (High expectations of print)

Enjoys books andf stories -- appreciates the special rewards of print. Has had extensive, repetitive experience of a wide range of favourite books. Seeks book experiences -- asks for stories, goes to books independently. Is curious about all aspects of print, e.g. signs, labels, advertisements. Experiments with producing written language.

B. LINGUISTIC FACTORS (Familiarity with written dialect in oral form)

Has built extensive models for the special features of written dialect. Syntax -- grammatical structures learned through meaningful use. e.g. full forms of contractions such as 'I'm' or 'What's', structures which imply consequence 'If...then...'
Vocabulary -- words not normally used in conversation e.g. 'however', 'dine', 'ogre'
Intonation patterns -- appropriate intonations for literary or non-conversational English e.g. 'Fat indeed! The very idea of it!'
Idioms -- special usage contrary to normal grammatical or semantic rules e.g. same example as for intonation --illusatrates that idiom often works with special intonation.

C. OPERATIONAL FACTORS (Essential strategies for handling written language)

Self monitoring operations: Self-correction and confirmation.
Predictive operations: Ability to 'use the context' to fill particular language slots.
Structural operations: Ability to follow plot, temporal and causal sequencesk, logical arrangements, etc.
Non-situational operations: Ability to understand language without the help of immediate sensory context.
Imaginative operations: Ability to create images which have not been experienced or represented in sensory reality, asnd apply metaphorical meanings.

D. ORTHOGRAPHIC FACTORS (Knowledge of the conventions of print)

Note: Few pre-schoolers would have grasped more than a few of the orthographic principles.
Story comes from print, not from pictures.
Directional conventions -- a complex progression:
Front of book has spine on left. Story begins where print begins. Left hand page comes before

right hand. Move from top to bottom of page. Begin left along line to right. Return to next line on left margin.

Print components -- clear concept of 'words', 'spaces', 'letters'

Letter form generalizations -- same letter may be written in upper and lower case, and in different print

Punctuation conventions.

Phonetic principle --letters have some relationship to sounds

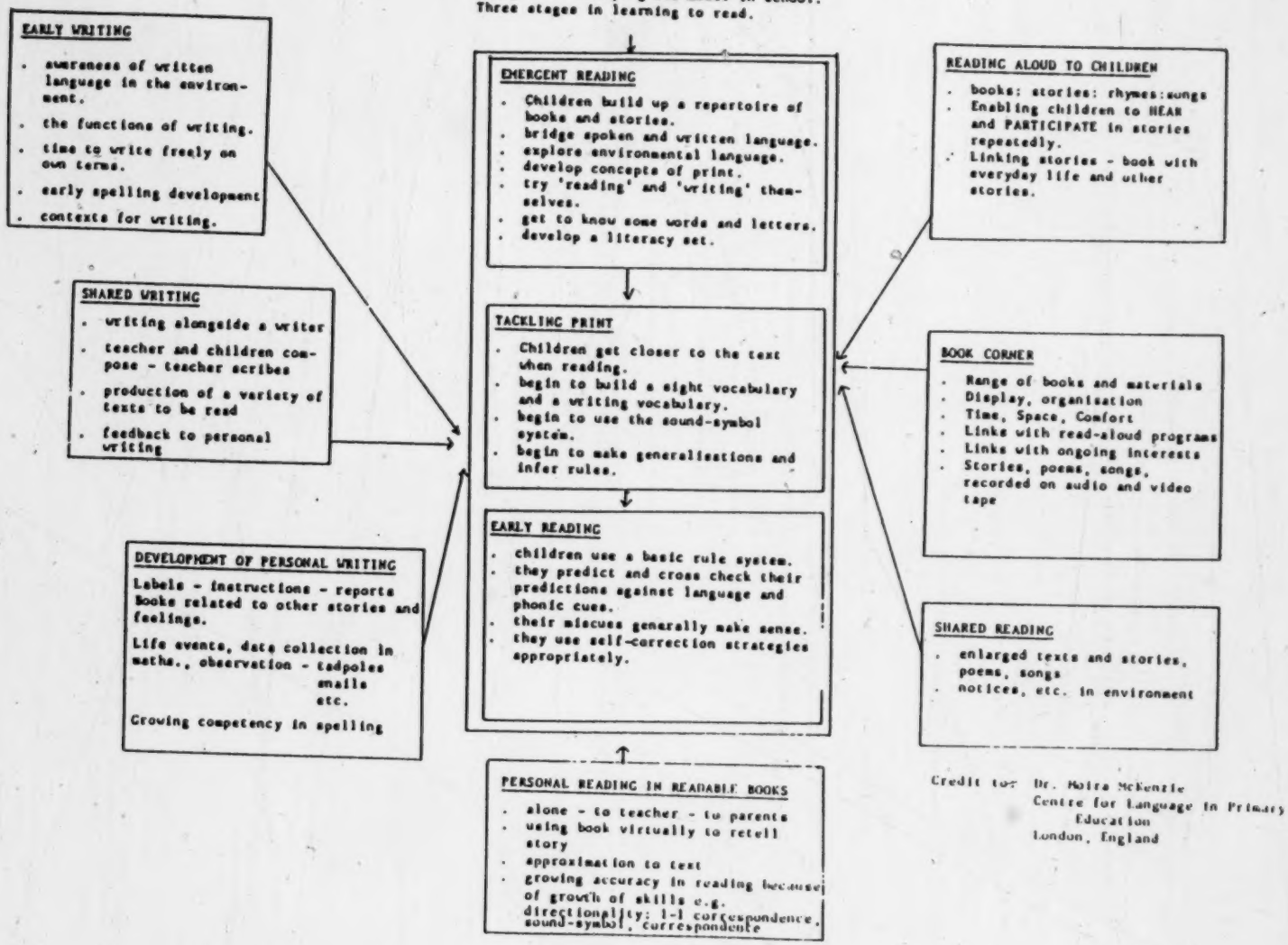
Consistency principle -- same word always has same spelling

APPENDIX B

McKenzie Model of Reading Development

MODEL BASED ON LITERACY EVENTS AT HOME OR K - 1

Using and developing the model in school.
Three stages in learning to read.


EARLY WRITING
• awareness of written language in the environment.
• the functions of writing.
• time to write freely on own terms.
• early spelling development
• contexts for writing.
SHARED WRITING
• writing alongside a writer
• teacher and children compose - teacher scribes
• production of a variety of texts to be read
• feedback to personal writing
DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONAL WRITING
Labels - instructions - reports
Books related to other stories and feelings.
Life events, data collection in maths., observation - tadpoles
snails
etc.
Growing competency in spelling
EMERGENT READING
• Children build up a repertoire of books and stories.
• bridge spoken and written language.
• explore environmental language.
• develop concepts of print.
• try 'reading' and 'writing' themselves.
• get to know some words and letters.
• develop a literacy set.
TACKLING PRINT
• Children get closer to the text when reading.
• begin to build a sight vocabulary and a writing vocabulary.
• begin to use the sound-symbol system.
• begin to make generalisations and infer rules.
EARLY READING
• children use a basic rule system.
• they predict and cross check their predictions against language and phonic cues.
• their miscues generally make sense.
• they use self-correction strategies appropriately.
PERSONAL READING IN READABLE BOOKS
• alone - to teacher - to parents
• using book virtually to retell story
• approximation to text
• growing accuracy in reading because of growth of skills e.g. directionality; 1-1 correspondence, sound-symbol, correspondents
READING ALOUD TO CHILDREN
• books: stories: rhymes: songs
• Enabling children to HEAR and PARTICIPATE in stories repeatedly.
• Linking stories - book with everyday life and other stories.
BOOK CORNER
• Range of books and materials
• Display, organisation
• Time, Space, Comfort
• Links with read-aloud programs
• Links with ongoing interests
• Stories, poems, songs, recorded on audio and video tape
SHARED READING
• enlarged texts and stories, poems, songs
• notices, etc. in environment

Credit to: Dr. Moira McKenzie
Centre for Language in Primary Education
London, England

APPENDIX C

Letter to Parents

Dear Parents,

As part of my Master's program at the University of Alberta, I am conducting a research study in the area of story reading. Your child's classroom has been selected to participate in this study.

This study will involve 4-6 weeks of observations of the language arts program in action. Approval to conduct this study has been obtained from both the University of Alberta and the school district.

If your child has permission to participate in the study, please sign the permission form below and return it to your child's teacher.

Please feel free to call me if you require any additional information regarding this study. I can be reached at _____ (days) and _____ (evenings).

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Veronica Hellweg

****

PERMISSION FORM

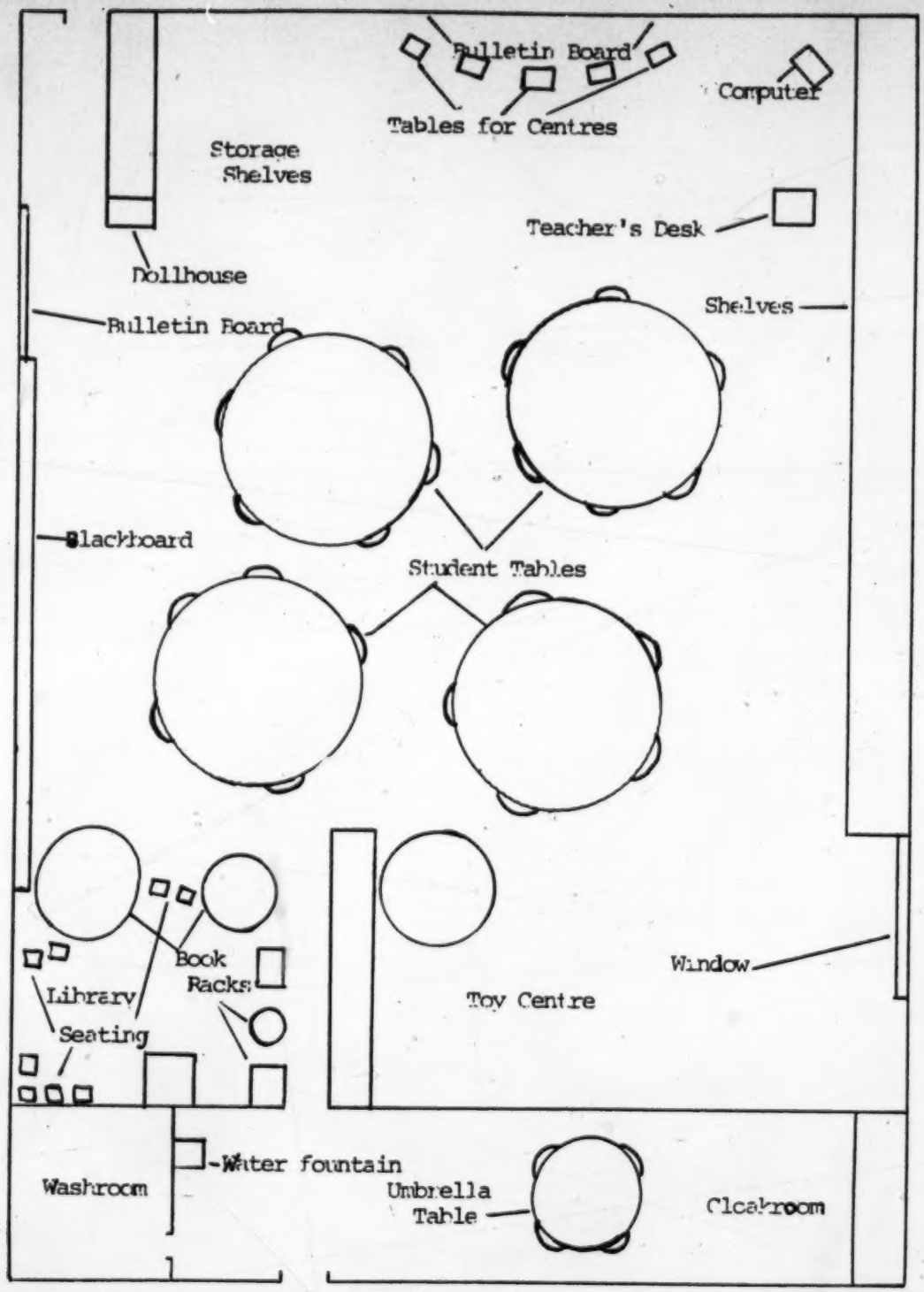
My child_____ has permission to participate in the research on story reading.

_____

(parent/guardian signature)

APPENDIX D

Classroom Floorplan


Bulletin Board
Computer
Tables for Centres
Storage Shelves
Teacher's Desk
Dollhouse
Shelves
Bulletin Board
Blackboard
Student Tables
Book Racks
Library Seating
Window
Toy Centre
Water fountain
Washroom
Umbrella Table
Cloakroom

APPENDIX E

First Chart Showing Children's Background Knowledge about Chicks

-are soft

-snuggle up to mom

-eat seeds and worms

-hatch out of eggs

-can run and play

-stand up and walk

-splash in the water, jump, swim

-we see them at
the farm,
classroom,
zoo,
pet store,

CHICKS

-They grow up to be mothers and fathers.

-They can be sold.

-They are sold to the market.

-they can be made into dinner.

-there are
black
chicks

APPENDIX F

Chart Showing Children's Growth in Knowledge about Chicks

-hatch from brown eggs and white eggs

-They cuddle up in the corner of the box
to keep warm,
to sleep
because they're scared

-they eat bread

-they chirp when
scared,
hurt,
hungry.

-the chick has
control over
when he
hatches

-they group
together

-Can choke when eating

-They jump on each other

-they breathe

-they can get hurt & die
when we are not gentle

- some are not strong

-they pip out of eggs

-They are wet when they hatch.

-Day by day chicks get stronger and bigger.

APPENDIX G

Books Read through Home Reading Program

Books Read in Home Reading Program for 15 Days

Todd	X		X		X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X		
Jimmy	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Ned		X	X	X			X	X	X				X	X		
Maureen	X		X	X		X		X	X		X		X	X	X	
Ken					X						X				X	
Sharon																
Douglas	X				X		X		X		X			X	X	
Susan		X		X						X			X			
Vera	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Jack															X	
Shawna										X						
Fred		X		X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X			
Lorna			X				X			X			X	X	X	
Joe								X		X						
Greg		X		X	X		X				X	X		X		
Judy																
Pamela		X					X					X	X			
Bob			X													
Nelson	x								X	X	X	X	X	X		
Eric	X				X				X	X		X				
Alvin		X			X		X		X		X			X		
Bill		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	

APPENDIX H

Centers for the 'Chick' Unit

Centers for the Chick Unit

Centre 1. With a partner read the handwritten story, The Little Red Hen in the homemade T.V. box.

Centre 2. Read the short handwritten poem. Use the pattern to write new poems.

Centre 3. Use the audio tape to help you read the story, The Magic Garden. Use the pattern to create a new story. (The pattern has been written out to assist children.)

Centre 4. Paint a picture about your favorite part of the story, The Little Red Hen. (All completed pictures are to be put together to create a book.)

Centre 5. Pretend you are a chick. Tell three things about yourself.

Centre 6. Plant wheat seeds by putting them between damp sheets of paper towels so you can see them germinate. (This activitry will be done in groups with adult assistance.)

Centre 7. From a choice of 4-6, plant a seed and water it. Review homemade book to decide what things plants need to grow. Write out the things plants need to grow. (This activity was done in groups with the teacher leading the discussion about plants' needs for growth.)

Centre 8. Take a bag of plastic toy vegetables and tell the names of all the vegetables to a partner.

Centre 9. Use th audio tape to assist you in the reading of the book Five Little Chickens. Do the worksheet on rhyming words.

Centre 10. Look at the series of pictures illustrating how an egg hatches. Put the pictures in order and then write one thing about each picture to create a book. (This centre was completed as a class project with assistance from grade 4 students. Students were each expected to complete one sentence. All contributions were put together to make a class book.)

Centre 11. Take a hard boiled egg. Use the accompnying run-off sheet to draw Ukrainian Easter symbols on your egg. Write out what the symbols represent. (This information was included on a run-off sheet.)

Centre 12. This centre contains 5 envelopes. Each envelope has a different direction such as: Make a chick and name it, describe the chick's home, describe a chick's feelings, tell what a chick eats. You decide which envelope you are going to do.

Centre 13. Make a chick by gluing 2 cotton balls together. Make a face and feet out of construction paper and glue them on. Walk your chick through 'Rosie's Walk'.

Centre 14. Use the audio tape to help you follow the story Littl;e Chick. Pretend you have 5 eggs. Write out where you would hide these eggs.

Centre 15. Read the book Old MacDonald had a Farm. and decide which animals you would like to have on a farm. Draw pictures of these animals and write their names beneath the illustrations. (Children's drawings to be put together to create a book.)

Centre 16. Write a birth announcement announcing the birth of a chick. Draw a picture to go with your announcement and post it on the bulletin board.

Centre 17. Look at the wordless picture book The Egg Book with a partner. Make up a story to go with the pictures.

Centre 18. Put words describing various parts of the hen onto the picture of the hen.